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FRENCH LITERATURE.



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# H A N D - B O O K

OF

# FRENCH LITERATURE:

Historical, Biographical, and Critical.

U. S. A. Foster.

REVISED AND EDITED

BY JAMES B. ANGELL,

PROFESSOR OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN BROWN UNIVERSITY.



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THIS Edition of Chambers's well known Hand-book of French Literature—a work which is written with acknowledged care and judgment and taste—has been prepared for the use of the numerous students of French in our schools and colleges. With reference to their wants, the following changes and additions have been made by the American Editor.

An Essay on the History and Characteristics of the French Language has been prefixed to the History of the Literature. Certain portions of the original work, which were deemed unnecessary in a text-book, have been omitted. Brief notices of Christine de Pisan, Alain Chartier, Le Sage, and Prévost, and biographical sketches of Bourdaloue, Massillon, and J. B. Rousseau, have been introduced. Foot-notes have been added, which give the dates of the birth and death of many writers, and refer the student to English Biographies and Essays, descriptive of the life and writings of the

most renowned French authors. Attention has also been called to some of those productions in English Literature, which have been modified either in form or in spirit, by the influence of French Literature. Of course all have not been enumerated which might serve this purpose, but only those which are to be found in almost every public library.

It is hoped that this little book may awaken and maintain, in the large class for whom it is designed, an intelligent interest in the French Language and Literature.

BROWN UNIVERSITY, *May*, 1857.



## PREFACE.

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ALMOST every one now learns something of French. But among the many who acquire as much knowledge of the language as to understand any passage they may occasionally meet, there are comparatively few who have any general acquaintance with the literature of France—perhaps we might say there is a large proportion who have never read a single volume of it besides their school text-books. They have heard of Montaigne, Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau, Fontaine, Rousseau, Voltaire; but they have no distinct knowledge of the leading characteristics of their works, or of the circumstances under which their genius developed itself. Still less have they any well-defined ideas of the literature as a whole, of the distinguishing features of each of its ages, or of the progressive steps by which the national mind of France has attained its present position. It is for such, chiefly, that the present volume has been written. Fain would we disarm criticism by protesting

with Malherbe, that we have not been “dressing meat for cooks;” and that we pretend not to offer any addition to the knowledge of those who are already familiar with this literature; for even had it been within the compass of our talent, it would not have comported with our design, nor yet with our limits, to enter upon anything like minute criticism. We have collected facts which are undisputed; and embodied in a popular way those general opinions which lie on the surface of literary history: but the depths we have not presumed to fathom.

Having designed the work, as has been intimated, principally for those who have passed through the usual course of education, we have deemed it unnecessary, and indeed undesirable, to furnish English versions of the specimens, except those of the earlier ages, which, in the original, would be unintelligible to ordinary French scholars in this country; and here, as matter of curiosity, we have generally added the old French in foot-notes.

MARGARET FOSTER.

EDINBURGH, *July*, 1854.

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# HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

## OF THE

### FRENCH LANGUAGE.

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EVERY people, who have chosen France for their home, have left their impress upon the national tongue. A few words of the gay and graceful Iberians still linger in the French, as the scattered remnants of that wonderful nation yet cling to their mountain homes. The Celts were invaded by Grecian civilization from the south, by Roman civilization from the east, and by Frankish barbarism from the North; yet they left behind them memorials of their existence, which were more enduring than brass or stone. Fragments of their language have survived all the revolutions which have ravaged their land. Several of the words which were known to the fierce warriors of Lutetia, are heard to-day in the streets of Paris. The Greeks, who founded Marseilles, Nice, Antibes, and other cities along the shores of the Mediterranean, gave to the land of their adoption many of the expressions which belong to a refined and commercial nation.\* The very name, France,

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\* Many French words of Greek origin were introduced at a later period, but Ampère traces a number back to the ancient colonists from Greece.

points us to the irruption of the Frankish tribes from the Rhine; and such words as *guerre*, *bannière*, *boulevard*, still remain to indicate what was the art which they taught to the conquered Gauls.

But the essential elements of the present language were brought into France by the Roman legions and colonists. By far the greater part of its words and constructions is derived from the Latin. Roman arts always followed Roman arms. The Latin works which were written in Gaul, no less than the vast amphitheatres, and aqueducts, and triumphal arches, which are scattered from the Alps to the Pyrenees, tell us of the days of Roman splendor in the favorite transalpine province. Gallic poets caught up the lyre of Virgil and Horace, and sang in strains which were not despised at Rome. Gallic legions fought beneath the Roman eagles. Gallic senators sat between Cicero and Brutus. Gallic scholars instructed Roman citizens in medicine and in oratory. Sixty cities of Gaul erected altars to Augustus. Latin was the language of the cities, and of all who aspired to learning, throughout the south of Gaul.\*

It must not be supposed that a pure and classical Latin was spoken even by the Roman legions themselves. They were drawn from all the provinces of the vast Roman empire. The common people of the cities of Gaul learned the corrupt provincial dialects of the colonists and soldiers, and mingled with them many of the words and idioms of their own vernacular. It is impossible to say how rapidly the rustic Latin, thus formed, was adopted by the people in the country. Though scholars have learnedly and earnestly discussed the subject, their opinions are still extremely discordant. The introduction of Christianity of course made the language of the church

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\* See Michelet's History of France, Vol. I. p. 50.



familiar to the priests throughout the whole of Gaul. But they seem to have been sensibly affected by their intercourse with the people; for their Latin gradually lost many of its distinctive features, and assumed the coarse and irregular forms of the rustic tongue. Even the learned Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, shows a most independent disregard of all rules of agreement, whether in gender, number, or case. He writes, *invocato nomen domini, excepto filiabus*, and *de ecclesiam*.

The Frankish race never attempted to force their harsh and guttural tongue upon the conquered people. They had the wisdom to rule through the clergy, and the clergy were the conservators of the Latin element. Even Charlemagne, with all his ambition for the unity of his extended empire, gave to the language of the Gauls but a very few words of German origin. By assiduous study of the Frankish language, by using it at his court, by wearing the Frankish dress, by collecting the popular ballads of Germany, and by the establishment of schools, he cultivated in the Germans a national spirit and a love for their national tongue. But he suffered the Gauls to speak their own language. He made liberal provisions for their instruction in Latin. He did not encourage any efforts to perfect the rustic tongue. He permitted the Latin and the Teutonic to overshadow it; and perhaps he hoped that, deprived of the sunlight of royal and scholastic favor, it would pine and perish. But it was now too deeply rooted in the affections of the people to die of neglect. Though untended and unpruned by grammarians and monarchs, it had all the elements of vigorous life. The priests were obliged to lay aside the language of the church, and speak and preach intelligibly to the people. The council of Rheims in 813—the subsequent one at Tours—and that at Mayence in 847, enjoined upon the prelates to translate their sermons into the

*langue rustique romane*, in order that all the hearers might understand.

This tongue received a new impulse from the division of the empire by the sons of Charlemagne, and the erection of a kingdom of the Gauls. It became a written language and the language of a court. The Frankish retreated across the Rhine; and the first recorded specimen of the language of France is the oath, which was taken by Louis the German and by the subjects of Charles the Bald, in 842.\*

But the vulgar tongue was not yet the language of learning and of law. Indeed, at this very time, scholars like Adalberon and Gerbert and Richer, devoted themselves to purifying their Latin, and thus rendering their thoughts inaccessible to the nation. All edicts and cartularies, all works of poetry, history, and philosophy, were written in Latin. The great mass of the inhabitants were utterly ignorant; and so, although they had cast off the supremacy of the Franks, the scholars and clergy and monarchs still held them bound beneath the domination of Latinity. The establishment of the Capetian Kings upon the throne, seemed to promise for a time an impulse towards a national feeling, and the development of a national language in central France. But feudalism rendered permanent unity impossible, and the minds of men were buried in hopeless apathy by the fear of the approaching end of the world. The year 1000, which was predicted as the time for universal destruction, passed quietly by. A reaction followed this torpor. France awakened into life. The clarion of war resounded. The Normans poured themselves on to the shores of England, and laid her prostrate at their feet. They seized upon Naples and Sicily. The oriflamme was raised. The crusades were preached, and the cry of St. Bernard, *Diex el volt*, was heard upon the walls of Jerusalem. The spirit and

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\* See page 63.

vigor of the invincible warriors were breathed into the forming language. In the reign of Louis IX., the last and best of the royal crusaders, it had acquired a strength, a boldness, and a precision, which characterize the utterances of a daring and passionate people.

We find that so early as this the language of the north of France was considerably different from that of the south. The first contained more of the Gaelic and Frankish elements, and was, consequently, harsher and bolder than the second, which resembled the Latin quite closely, and was flexible, smooth, and harmonious. The former was called the *langue d'oïl* (*oui*), and was subsequently used by the Trouvères, who wrote most of the ancient Allegories, Legends, and Fabliaux. The latter was the *langue d'oc*, and was the tongue of the famous Troubadours.\* The weaker and more beautiful language of the south yielded at last to the ruder and stronger *langue d'oui*, and therefore it is only the history of the latter which we have to trace.

So rapidly did it change its form during these years of transition to which we have alluded, that the children scarcely understood the words of their grandparents. There were no settled rules of orthography. Every generation reproduced the works of the past in a modified form of spelling. For instance, the version of the first verse of the first psalm stood thus at the end of the twelfth century:—

“Beoneuret li hom ki ne alat el conseil de féluns, en la veie de pêcheurs ne stout, et en la chaere des escharnisurs ne sist.”

And at the end of the thirteenth, thus,

“Beneit soit le bier qui ne foreie el cunseil des engrès, et ne estuet en voie de pécheours, et ne siet en la chaière de pestilence.”

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\* See page 63.

It was natural that a manly and chivalric people should make their first intellectual efforts in celebrating the praises of their heroes. Accordingly we find that the earliest monuments of the literature of France are the songs and tales, which recount the deeds of Roland, Oliver, and Charlemagne. While the freshness and *naïveté* of the language in its youth fitted it to paint the scenes, and embody the spirit of a primitive age, the earnest labors of the earliest narrators and poets hastened its development, and prepared it for the manifold purposes of advancing civilization. We find it at the beginning of the thirteenth century capable of describing with simplicity and power a great historical event, the capture of Constantinople in 1204 by the French. The brave old soldier, Villehardouin, tells the story with an artlessness and truthfulness, which charm us even at this day. The champions of learning, the doctors of the famous University of Paris, were frowning upon the vulgar tongue. They were fiercely discussing in their choicest Latin those subtle questions of Nominalism and Realism, which so completely absorbed the loftiest minds of the whole of Europe. They little dreamed that the day would come, when the words of the unlettered chronicler would be more zealously and lovingly pondered by the Parisian scholar than the profound and witty discussions of John of Parma and Guillaume de St. Amour.

The language soon acquired new honors from the second great prose writer, Jean, Sire de Joinville. At the request of Jeanne, the wife of Philip the Fair, he wrote the *Life of St. Louis*. The language in his hands was less cautious and timid in its utterances than in those of Villehardouin, and far more flexible and graceful. It had something of the freedom and carelessness of conscious strength. The biographer's contemporaries, Marie de France and Thibaut, Comte de Cham-



pagne, show us by their *lais* and *chansons*, and Guillaume de Loris by his famous *Roman de la Rose*, that their language already possessed considerable richness, harmony, and rhythmical power. During the residence of the French at Constantinople they had borrowed many words and idioms from the Greeks, and had polished and refined many of their vernacular expressions in accordance with the principles of a classical taste. They have always been peculiarly susceptible to the elevating influences of Grecian culture. When the Mohammedans laid waste the Eastern Empire, and scattered the distinguished scholars of its capital over Western Europe, nowhere were those representatives of learning more warmly welcomed, and nowhere were their teachings more ardently received than at the schools of philosophy in Paris.

If we pass from the earliest prose writers of France to those of the fourteenth century, we first meet with Froissart, the chronicler of the brave old days of courtly life in the land of our fathers as well as in France. His style is more studied and severe, though perhaps less thoroughly infused with the genuine spirit of French than that of his great predecessor, Joinville. Latin was already going forth from the university, and binding the language of the people in the fetters of scholastic formality. The natural coloring, the youthful strength, and the buoyant freedom of the French were now in peril. The violent commotions in the reigns of Charles VI. and Charles VII. seriously retarded the progress of letters. Yet their Secretary was Alain Chartier, who is supposed to have invented the *rime redoublée* and the *rondeau*.

In the reign of Louis XI., so dark with many a scene of cruelty, the dawn of a brighter day for the national language and literature became clearly apparent. His patronage of scholars, his encouragement of printing, the poetry of Villon, and the history of Comines, all foretold an approaching Re-

vival of Letters. Villon, who was a greater knave than poet, and who twice escaped the hangman's cord by royal favor, rendered an incalculable service to the language by daring to employ in his poems the words of every-day life. These always form the real riches of a language. All scholars and critics from Marot to Boileau have united in acknowledging their indebtedness to this singular poet of *fripons*. Comines wrote the memoirs of his royal master, and was the first French writer who rose above the work of the chronicler almost to the art of the historian, and gave to the language a precision and power which were not again seen till the time of Montaigne.

With the accession of Francis I. to the throne the national tongue attained new honors and privileges, but was also encompassed by dangers, which it was scarcely prepared to resist. Then, for the first time, the laws of the realm were recorded and proclaimed in French. The court was filled with poets and scribblers. Authors were as highly honored by the king as knights had been by Louis IX. A princess was prouder of her writings than of her noble birth. In a word French became fashionable; and from that moment its purity was in peril. It changed its form and character with every caprice of a fickle court. The gentlemen, who had been to the wars in Italy, brought home Italian expressions, with which they overloaded their French. Thus originated that corrupt jargon, which Henri Estienne called the *courtisanesque*, and which was so long heard in all the salons of Paris.

The Italian influence was strongly opposed by the classical scholars and by the first Protestant reformers. The earliest opponents of the Romish faith cherished and defended the language of the people; and had they continued to use it, as Luther employed the popular German, who knows but France would to-day be a Protestant land? But they soon became

ambitious to meet the scholars of the ancient church upon their own ground, and defeat them with their own scholastic weapons. They expended their power in learned discussions in Latin, and employed their time in confounding doctors rather than in preaching glad tidings to the multitude. The impulse which they thus gave to the study of Latin was warmly seconded by the classical students, who had begun to fear that their favorite studies would be entirely neglected in the ardent cultivation of French. The priests and monks, who had almost the entire control of public education, were trembling lest the Bible should be translated and placed in the hands of the laity.

But, though many of the Protestants became involved in endless theological disputations in Latin, some of them left an impress on the popular language, which is clearly visible down to this day. There was Clement Marot, the translator of the Psalms, the graceful and delicate poet, from whom La Fontaine was proud to draw inspiration. There was Marguerite of Navarre, the protector of the persecuted, the patroness of French poets, a writer herself of no little merit. There were also the grammarian Ramus, the renowned scholars the Estiennés, and Theodore De Bèze. There too was John Calvin, whose services to the French language were almost as conspicuous as those which he rendered to religion. It was not till the *langue d'oïl* became the organ of the Huguenots, that it crossed the Loire, and made its conquests in the southern provinces. Then, for the first time, it was heard alike at La Rochelle, at Paris, at Nismes, at Lyons, at Geneva, and also in Holland, that asylum of the oppressed, whence for two hundred years it sent forth its boldest and ablest works to the world. Thus, though the faith of the Protestants has not conquered France, it is the language of

the Protestants which is heard from Calais to Marseilles, and from Bordeaux to the Rhine.

It may seem somewhat strange that no one should have attempted to write a French grammar, until Francis I. had been fourteen years upon the throne. It is still more strange that the first French grammar should have been written by an Englishman, and printed at London. John Palsgrave, an eminent scholar, who had studied at Cambridge and Oxford and Paris, was employed by Henry VIII. to teach French to the Princess Mary, who was to marry Louis XII. in 1514. After the death of the French king, the widow was married to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; and probably at her suggestion, the duke urged Palsgrave to prepare a French grammar for the use of the court. Accordingly in 1530 he published one with the following title, "*L'Esclarcissement de la Langue françoise.*"\* He is distinguished for his simplicity, clearness, and good sense. He says that French was spoken most correctly between the Seine and the Loire. He alludes to the influence of the *courtisanesque* style upon the pronunciation at Paris. He reproaches the Parisians for calling themselves *Pazisiens*, and for saying *Mazie* instead of *Marie*. Most of the rules which he lays down, are as applicable now as they were at that time. It is highly probable that he first regularly used the acute accent to mark the sharp *e*.

The famous miser and brilliant scholar, Jacques Dubois, surnamed Sylvius, equally renowned for his meanness and learning, was the first Frenchman who composed a grammar of his language. It was written in Latin, and published in 1531. His vanity prompted him to speak as a dictator. He invented a new orthography, in which some of the letters of the alphabet were dropped, and several new characters were

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\* This work is exceedingly rare. France has only one copy, and that is in the Mazarin Library.



introduced. But the only suggestion of Dubois which has been approved by subsequent writers, is the use of the grave accent over the open *e*.

In 1550, Louis Meigret, a scholar from Lyons, who had settled in Paris, published, a "*Tretté de la Grammère Francoise*," in which he contended that the orthography ought to conform to the pronunciation. The theory was very plausible; but the difficult question at once arose, Whose pronunciation should be adopted? The courtiers from the various provinces pronounced the same word very differently. Meigret's attempt to introduce a phonographic system met with many insuperable objections. Yet it was he who first proposed to write *notre*, *blé*, *arrêter*, &c., in their present form, to substitute *y* for *i* in such words as *moyen*, *royal*, *rayon*, and to use the apostrophe where a vowel is omitted or elided.

The vexed question of orthography was finally settled in French, as it must be in every language, against the party who wished to follow the pronunciation. Each generation changes the sound of many words, and if the spelling were changed accordingly, the books of one century would be as difficult for the next to understand, as the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer are for the children of our day. Besides, the history of a word is contained in its form. Its resemblance to its family tells us its origin, and if a glance at it carries us back to the home from which it has come, it stands before us filled with new life and clothed with new power.

Robert Estienne, the father of Henry, published at Geneva during his exile a *Traicté de la Grammaire françoise*. This renowned printer and scholar followed the plan of systematic works on Latin grammar. He traced the constructions and words back to their original source, and clearly developed the principles which ought to guide all writers in their use.

The passionate study of Greek by the French scholars of

the sixteenth century, produced a visible effect upon the form of words in their vernacular. They evidently aimed to give a learned and classical air to their language. Since each proposed such modifications as suited his taste, or most signally displayed his scholarship, we find the most wonderful diversity in the spelling of that age. It was also more complicated, cumbrous, and pedantic than that of the fifteenth or that of the seventeenth century. If we compare a page of Rabelais with a page of Ramus or of Montaigne, and a chapter of either with one of Philippe de Comines and one of Bossuet, we shall be surprised to observe how great is the difference in the orthography of the three contemporaries, and how much more the spelling of the fifteenth century resembles that of the seventeenth, than it does that of the intervening sixteenth. It is true that the language was enriched by this first contact with the Greek. And the classical ardor of Henry Estienne and of the group of scholars who clustered around him, probably stayed the invasion of Italian corruptions which were then pouring in upon France. They loved the Greek, and they asserted the excellence of the French, because it resembled the Greek more nearly than did the Italian. They accused the Italians of having borrowed the chief beauties of their language from the French. They strove to show the richness and variety of the French by exhuming old words of the days of Marot, and drawing the most expressive words from the various *patois* of the provinces. But while they thus contributed to the elevation and development of their language, they perilled its purity and naturalness by their love for classical learning. They saved it from the Italian, but they almost surrendered it to the Greek and the Latin. How are the style of Amyot, the translator of Plutarch, and that of the genial Montaigne tinged with the coloring of their ancient masters and models ! Ronsard, the poet laureate of the court of Charles

IX., and the circle of poets whom he called his *Pléiade*, introduced not only classical thoughts and idioms, but sometimes Greek and Latin words into their verses,

“Leur muse en français parla grec et latin.”

But, happily for the fortunes of the language, Malherbe appeared, “the tyrant of words and syllables.” His taste, his studies, and his position all fitted him for the work of reformation to which he was called. He hated Greek and the whole classical school of poets in France. He turned with delight to Villon and Marot, and studied the language of the people. He declared that the porters of grain spoke the best French. In the spirit of the severest criticism he scanned every metaphor, weighed every word, and insisted on the utmost clearness of conception and expression. While in the agonies of death he suddenly rose up in bed, and in violent terms corrected the bad pronunciation of his attendants. His confessor having gently reproved him for this outburst of passion at such a time, he replied, “I will defend the purity of the French language even to the moment of my death.”

Henry IV. was by no means reluctant to favor a man, who openly combated the literary champions of his royal predecessors and enemies. He was glad to destroy the imposing prestige which the works of distinguished poets had lent to the reigns of Catherine de Medicis and her sons. He desired to supplant the love which his people had cherished for Italian and classical productions, by a national pride and enthusiasm. He wished to make his subjects patriots and Frenchmen. He therefore warmly seconded Malherbe by every means in his power. Classical circumlocutions and allegories, and Italian vices and conceits, were banished from the Louvre. The court at last took pride in speaking French.

But though Italian affectation was driven from the household of the king, it was not without a refuge and a home.

Almost under the shadow of the Louvre lived a brilliant lady, of Italian descent, Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet. Around her was gathered a court, which, in numbers, elegance, and genius, rivalled that of the monarch himself. The numerous disciples of Ronsard, the polished courtiers of the fallen house of Valois, aspiring poets, who feared the sternness of Malherbe, and all the nobles, who were opposed to the king, thronged her elegant salon. The hostile parties showered satires upon each other, and the issue of the contest seemed doubtful, so long as the king was alive. But in 1610 he died, and his mother, Marie de Medicis, obtained the regency. She graciously favored the Hotel de Rambouillet with her protection and patronage. Her administrator, Concini, a Florentine, invited to the court Marini, a Neapolitan cavalier. He joined to his Italian nature something of the dignity of Castilian manners, and was as perfect a master of the strained and turgid style of the Spaniards, as of the learned and artificial style of his native land. This hero of the world of madrigals and sonnets and flowers was chosen by the circle of *beaux esprits* to contend with the fierce and unsparing critic, who was loved and admired by the people. Marini was really the father of that school, who were called the *Précieuses*. He taught the art of avoiding the language of every-day life, and of rhythmically and gracefully linking those words, which belong to the vocabulary of compliments and flattery. A critic has happily defined his talent as "*l'artifice d'exploiter le néant.*" But to his influence was due the appearance of the St. Amands and Benserades and Théophiles, who spent their lives in writing wretched rhymes to the Philises, and making bouquets for the Chlorises. The most brilliant period in the history of the Hotel de Rambouillet was between the death of Malherbe in 1629, and that Voiture in 1648. At that time its presiding genius was



Julie d'Angennes, the daughter of Catherine de Vivonne. As this fair lady sat in her bed\* to receive the homage of her many admirers, she often saw among them Voiture, Balzac, Chapelain, Thomas Corneille, Quinault, Scudéry, Scarron, Bussy-Rabutin, and the great Corneille; and of the nobility the La Rochefoucaulds, the Clermonts, the Duchesses of Angoulême, of Nemours, of Longueville, of La Tremouille, and even the Princes of Condé.

The *Précieuses* proposed, as they said, to *dévolgariser* the language. They aimed to accomplish this end, not by resorting to the ancient tongues for assistance, but by developing the latent powers of the French. They introduced new uses of old words, new names for common things, new combinations of terms, and a countless number of new comparisons and metaphors.†

It was fortunate for the language that Boileau and Molière came forward to complete the work which Malherbe had begun. Thé first spoke with such power and justice that he became a kind of dictator in criticism. His opinions are cited as law even at this day. The great father of French comedy wielded more delicate and perhaps more effective weapons than his friend and colleague. The plays called *Les Précieuses* and *Les Femmes Savantes* held the mirror up to folly. Paris laughed at itself, and reformed.

We must not suppose that the language gained nothing by this last great struggle, through which it was compelled to pass. Many metaphorical expressions, which are now so frequently used that we are never reminded of their tropical nature, then, for the first time, enriched it by their presence. Three of the *Précieuses*, it is said, also suggested the important changes in orthography, which were afterwards adopted

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\* See page 149.

† See pages 150-1.

by the Academy in the second edition of its Dictionary. There is no doubt that the hypercriticism and excessive refinement of the sensitive poets at the Hotel de Rambouillet called forth the lexicographers and grammarians and rhetoricians of the reign of Louis XIV.

No less than three large dictionaries appeared between the years 1680 and 1694. The first was written by Richelet and published at Geneva. He proposed some changes in orthography, gave the etymology of many words, and cited passages and referred to authors to show what constituted good usage.\* Antoine Furetière published the *Dictionnaire Universel* at the Hague, in 1690. Four years later the Academy brought out their great work, after fifty-nine years of labor, and proved how well they had toiled for the end which their founder, Richelieu, had proposed, "to establish fixed rules for the French language, and to render it the most perfect of modern tongues." They sanctioned those words which elegant usage had adopted. They sifted the common language thoroughly. Their exacting taste never sacrificed correctness to expressiveness and strength. They unfortunately omitted to explain etymologies, to cite passages from good authors, and to introduce any word or expression which had not the most indisputable claim to a place in their classical vocabulary. Their work

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\* His work was a treasury of satire as well as of learning. In illustrating definitions, he held up to ridicule whatever displeased his cynical taste. Thus, under the word *médecin*, we find "On dit que le Sieur Finot est un chétif médecin." At the word *vers* we read, "Les boutiques des espiçiers de Paris sont pleines des œuvres de Colletet, tant en *vers* qu'en prose." Again at *poétique* "Le mariage de Colletet avec sa servante est un mariage vraiment *poétique*." To the definition of *pédant* is added, "De tous les animaux domestiques à deux pieds, qu'on appelle vulgairement *pédans*, du Clérat est le plus misérable et le plus canere; il sent le pédant de deux lieues à la ronde."

This dictionary was afterwards abridged, and, under the title of *Dictionnaire de Wailly*, was used in all the French schools and colleges.

has almost continually been undergoing revision to meet the increasing wants of the nation. Having always been under the guardianship of that learned body who first gave it to the world, its decisions have invariably been received with that deference and respect which the opinions of the greatest linguists and the ripest scholars are sure to command.

The critical works of Vaugelas, Ménage, Thomas Corneille, Patru, Bouhours, D'Olivet, and Boileau, helped to determine with precision the laws which governed their language. The literature which was formed by their distinguished contemporaries gave permanence and fixedness to those laws. The age of Louis XIV. is the classical period in French literature. The language then received essentially the form which it has since maintained. Voltaire, with his unsparing knife, afterwards pruned it of many excrescences. The romantic school of this century have made some innovations. Science and the arts in their rapid progress have added many technical terms. But the language of the best living writers does not materially differ from that of the few great masters of the seventeenth century, whom Frenchmen of every variety of opinion delight to admire, revere, and imitate.

It is natural that the countrymen of Racine and Corneille and Pascal should be proud of their language. They are accustomed to boast of its great superiority over all the living tongues of Europe. While we acknowledge its peculiar merits, we cannot perceive in it such marked pre-eminence.

It has few of the requisites of a poetical language. Although not rough, it is not specially melodious. While its vowel sounds lack the majesty and fullness of the Italian and Spanish, it has not the combinations of consonants, which give strength and expressiveness to the English and the German. It admits of little change in the order of words. It does not grant the poet the liberty of inversion, and therefore it confines him too

nearly within the limits of prose. It permits very few ellipses. It requires the writer to express all that he means, and does not suffer him to make sketches of pictures which the imagination of the reader may delight to complete. It does not abound in those picturesque words, whose sound seems to indicate the meaning, by imitating the trickling of the rivulet, the roaring of the flood, and the howling of the wind. It has scarcely any compound words, and therefore is destitute of those expressive epithets which are found in many languages, and which are of such service in descriptive poetry. But it does possess a delicacy, simplicity, and clearness, which are admirably adapted to amatory and sentimental poetry. The French ballads and popular songs are unrivalled in beauty.

It is better suited to oratory than to poetry. The short periods, which it generally requires, have great directness and power. Its clearness allows long periods to be used without any danger of obscurity. Its precision makes it pointed and striking, while it has sufficient flexibility to be flowing, impetuous, and impassioned. It sometimes attains to a marvellous vividness and intensity. In the hands of Massillon and of Bossuet it reaches a fullness and roundness of form which remind us of the tongue of the great Roman orator.

It possesses certain qualities which adapt it to the wants of philosophy and science. By its numerous tenses of the verb, by its change of terminations to mark differences of gender, by its placing all modifying words and clauses as nearly as possible to the word which they modify, and by its hostility to all inversions in sentences, it gains the power of expressing the nicest distinctions and shades of meaning with the greatest precision and clearness. French philosophy owes much of its renown to the excellence of the language. From the Encyclopedists to Victor Cousin, the French metaphysicians have been, almost without exception, eclectics; and their chief



merit has been the clear exposition of the various systems which have been constructed in Greece and Germany and England.

As a medium for conversation the French is acknowledged to be unsurpassed. It may well be questioned whether, from its easy flow, its classical grace, and its charming sprightliness, its greatest achievements have not been in the salon. Its whole life has fitted it for colloquial power. It has long been the language of almost every court in Europe. The French have always especially aspired to elegance and brilliancy in society. They consider conversation as a fine art, and make it the study of life. The sound of many a word, to which they have given a peculiar meaning in connection with some witty remark or some striking event, recalls to the mind of the hearer a whole train of amusing or thrilling reminiscences. The spoken language thus possesses great piquancy and richness, and suggests a thousand ideas, which could only be expressed by tedious circumlocutions in any other language. Its vivacity and rapidity offer great facilities for sallies of wit, and for striking repartees. But it has so long been the language of politeness and ceremonious life, that many of its words have become hollow and unmeaning, or insincere and false.

The same peculiarities which make the French a good colloquial language also fit it for tales and letters; for these are little more than written conversation. In narrative and epistolary style the French have always been unequalled. They are the best *raconteurs* in Europe. What language has such power as theirs to "*dire des riens avec grace*"? In history the French language has been used with marked success. It seems equally suited to the profound investigations of Guizot and to the brilliant descriptions of Thiers.

While then it may be less musical than the Italian, less

majestic than the Spanish, less manly than the English, less rich and imaginative than the German, it is more delicate and lucid than either.

The French have often predicted that their language would become universal. More than once it has threatened to conquer the continent of Europe. It followed the victorious armies of Louis XIV. beyond the boundaries of his kingdom on every side. Napoleon made it the language of law from Egypt to the Frozen Seas, and from Gibraltar to Moscow. But at his fall it retreated to its native home. What arms could not do for its propagation, fashion, refinement, and literature are partially accomplishing. It is now an essential element in the education of every school-boy in Europe. It is the language of society and of diplomacy at almost every court. No one, who claims the name of a scholar, can neglect the study of the rich and varied thoughts which it has enshrined. But we can hardly conceive of its ever becoming the spoken language of the sturdy Teutonic race. It is perfectly suited to the genius of the French; but it does not thrive as an exotic. Neither the French race nor the French language possesses that aggressive and conquering tendency which forms so striking a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race and tongue.

# FRENCH LITERATURE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE literature of France has in all ages borne a national rather than an individual character; it has been the organ of the general thought and feeling of the community, each author chastening and even stifling his peculiar genius in deference to prevailing tastes and opinions. If this has its value, as enabling us to read the common mind in every single work, it has its disadvantage, too, as not commanding that kind of interest which we feel in forming an acquaintance with writers who abandon themselves to their native impulses, and lead us with them into regions of daring thought and impassioned feeling. The Frenchman never forgets his rule and measure—those of his day; and therefore in every page of his book we learn how people thought and felt in the circle to which he belonged; not how he himself could have done if he durst. “He is the organ of all,” says Nisard,\* “rather than a privileged person having thoughts which pertain to himself alone, and which he imposes on others, in virtue of some extraordinary prerogative. The man of genius, in France, is he who

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\* Histoire de la Littérature Française, i. 17.

says what every one knows. He is only the intelligent echo of the multitude; and if he wishes us to listen to him, he must not seek to astonish us with his particular views, but expound to us our own." Hence he concludes French literature is a living image of that empire of reason over the inferior powers which is the glory of human nature, and hence the extent of its domain.

The history of French literature has been divided into several periods of vigor, transition, and decay, more distinctly marked as to their characteristics than clearly definable as to their eras. To us, it is of most importance to remember that France has twice been honored to lead the van in the march of European letters. She furnished the first specimens of modern, or rather mediæval literature in the compositions of the troubadours and trouvères, who not only awoke the spirit of song among their contemporaries, but laid up treasures of legendary history and romantic fiction for unborn generations. The zenith of this glory was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was followed by a period of decay and obscurity, passing into one of transition, in which the revival of ancient learning, the improved methods of philosophy, and the introduction of free inquiry in religion, prepared the nation for entering on a new career. Thus was introduced, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, that brilliant period generally known as the age of Louis XIV., the golden age of French literature, which again took the lead in European progress. During the eighteenth century, it fell once more behind, being now eclipsed, not, as before, by the literatures of Spain and Italy, but by those of England and Germany, which have continued in the ascendant.



# THE MIDDLE AGES.

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## I.—THE TROUBADOURS.

THE PROVENÇAL LANGUAGE—GENERAL CHARACTER OF ITS POETRY—EROTIC POETRY OF THE TROUBADOURS — SIRVENTES — DEVOTIONAL POETRY — POEMS ON THE CRUSADES—DECAY OF TROUBADOUR POETRY—AND OF THE PROVENÇAL LANGUAGE.

WHEN the old races had been swept from the earth, or had hid themselves under the skirts of the new conquerors, merging their nationality that they might be allowed to live, a new chaos was generated throughout those regions which Roman domination had before reduced to order and stamped with uniformity. Into this chaos must he penetrate who would trace the origin of the modern nations of Europe, their languages, their literatures, and the peculiar genius which belongs to each. Suffice it for the present purpose to remark, that one among the new languages, that of Provence, or Southern France, was earlier cultivated than the rest, and attracted greater attention by becoming the organ of a school of poetry which excited the emulation of the surrounding nations, and which even now possesses a peculiar interest as containing the first germs of modern literature in Europe.

The causes of the premature development of the Provençal are to be found chiefly in the social condition of the country. While Northern France, in common with the rest of Europe,

was subject to tyrannical domination and the frequent ravages of foreign enemies, the South enjoyed peace and prosperity—first under the kings of Arles, and then under the counts of Provence—during a period of more than two centuries.

Feudal law reigned, indeed, here as elsewhere, but in its mildest form; and those frightful cruelties which fill the history of Northern France, seem rarely to have occurred in the South; while the institutions of chivalry lent their aid in polishing and civilizing the once barbarous nobility. Moreover, the accession of the wealthy counts of Barcelona to the throne in the year 1092, introduced a taste for the elegance, the arts, and the sciences which Spain had learned from the Moors, and communicated to the people of Southern France a poetic elegance which shed its humanizing influence over the greater part of Europe.

The multiplicity of lordly courts was eminently favorable to this progress. The supremacy of the monarch was little more than nominal, the higher vassals exercising absolute authority in their own domains, and rivalling the sovereign courts in the splendor of their retinue, and in the enjoyment of all that could gratify either sense or imagination. It must be added, that extreme laxity of manners prevailed, as the natural consequence of wealth, leisure, and court life. Whatever religious feeling existed, found expression in pilgrimages and crusades; but it was no check to licentious morals, the clergy themselves not only setting the example of profligacy in their own lives, but encouraging it by the easy sale of absolutions.

It was under these circumstances that the literature flourished which we are now briefly to scan, as introductory to that which is more strictly French. So early as the ninth century, we find notices of court jongleurs or minstrels; but whatever was the character of those songs with which they were wont to amuse their patrons, it would seem to have been found un-

suitable to that more refined mode of life which was established in court and castle ere the end of the eleventh century. There was needed a style congenial to the spirit of chivalry, and tending to foster and develop its influence. The nobles themselves undertook to supply this. Their vernacular language, the Provençal or *Langue d'Oc*,\* which had been gradually developing since the days of Charlemagne, had now attained a certain degré of grammatical precision. So early as the tenth century, its study had been a favorite recreation among the higher classes of the people; and now the art of poetry, called the *Gai-Saber* (Joyous Art), was adopted as the elegant occupation of those hours which were not spent in the ruder pastimes of the field.

The style which was invented under these circumstances was highly artificial—at least as compared with the early poetry of other countries. The rhymes were varied in a thousand ways, and the verses so interlaced, that though a single rhyme was preserved throughout each stanza, it recurred at various intervals, the composer relying on the harmony of the language and the well-taught ear of the listener for making the expectation of the rhyme and its postponement equally productive of pleasure. The number and accentuation of the syllables were also carefully studied, and, in this school of poetry, took the place of the quantity and accent which formed the basis of Greek and Latin versification. In the languages of antiquity, all syllables were distributed into two classes, the long and the short, the relative duration of every sound being fixed by invariable rules. Each line, or verse, as it was called, was composed of a certain number of measures called feet, having some correspondence to bars in music, as they marked the rise and fall of the tune, and always comprised the same time, whatever the difference in the sound of the pronunciation.

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\* *Oc* was the Provençal word for *Yes*. See page 63.

However varied the kind of verse, according to the number and species of feet employed, it was indispensable so to arrange the words that the ear might be struck by the equality of the time and the uniform cadence of the sounds. In the modern languages of Europe, emphasis seems to have assumed the place of quantity, the Provençal poets having set the example. We stop not to inquire whether our syllables can or cannot be distinguished into long and short, or whether they would not have been thus distinguished, and their quantities strictly preserved, if the ancient classics had been the earliest models of our versification. The fact is, that the troubadours, being probably unacquainted with Latin prosody, and relying only on the ear as their guide to harmony, organized their verses in a more simple manner by the alternation of accented with unaccented syllables; and the laws of measure and rhyme established by these first of modern poets have been generally adopted throughout Europe. We say the laws of versification established by the troubadours, but not with the intention of conveying that they were formally laid down as an art of poetry; for it is very doubtful whether these rhymers ever explained, or indeed were capable of explaining, those ingenious forms which their exquisite sensibility to musical impressions led them to adopt as the most agreeable. As to the matter, their compositions exhibit little play of imagination, little depth of emotion, and very slight traces of learning. No historical or mythological allusions, no comparisons drawn from foreign manners, no reference to the learning or the science of the schools, lead the reader to suspect their authors of any book lore whatever. In fact, some of the most ingenious of the troubadours were knights and princes innocent even of the art of reading their mother-tongue. Their themes were such as might be expected from a set of idle and profligate nobles—the all-prevailing one being love, or rather gallantry, as understood and practised in those lawless ages. And as there was



no such thing then as the multiplication of copies by printing, the only mode in which an author could give circulation to his effusions was by having them sung from château to château. This he might either do in his own person, attended by his jongleur, or he might commit his verses to the memory of some itinerant minstrel, who would chant them through the country. Every house was open for the entertainment of these professors of music and song.

Scarcely had the Gai-Saber been established in Southern France, when it became the rage throughout the neighboring countries. Half the sovereigns of Europe adopted the Provençal language, and enlisted themselves among the poets; and these having led the way, there was soon neither baron nor knight but deemed himself bound to add to his fame as a gallant warrior the reputation of a gentle troubadour.\* It was not then, as in after-times, that monarchs deigned to patronize the humble professor: the great ones of the earth were now themselves the professors, and the only patrons were the ladies. In the early days of chivalry, women had ceased to be beautiful ciphers, and had acquired complete liberty of action: the homage paid to them was mingled with religious sentiment, and amounted almost to worship. The oath taken by every knight was the apotheosis of his lady-love. Nor was this only ideal. No sooner had Provence become an independent sovereignty (879 A. D.), than the nobles had repudiated the Salic law, by which hereditary fiefs might not pass to their daughters; and now they might inherit in default of male heirs, or even by testamentary bequest. The counts of both Provence and Toulouse had derived their titles through female rights, and woman was in the ascendant. The part allotted to them in the poetical world, was that of being the sovereign arbiters

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\* From *trobar*, to find or invent; poetry being then regarded rather as an art than an inspiration.

of merit—as absolute in their decrees as the barons in their lordly edicts. Not more regular and solemn were the courts of the feudal lords than were the diets, popularly known as Courts of Love,\* or, as they would be called in modern days, meetings of the Academy for the promotion of Poetry and Gallantry. These courts forbade the admission of vulgar candidates for poetic fame. They polished the language and preserved its purity; they dictated subjects for verse; decided the merits of the *tensons*, as the poetical dialogues were called; recompensed the deserving, and punished with degradation those who infringed the laws. In the twelfth century, when they were in the zenith of their glory, grammars of the Provençal language were written, probably at the express desire of the courts to which their authors belonged; and the troubadours discussed in verse questions of the most scrupulous delicacy and the most disinterested gallantry. It must not be concealed, however, that there are shadows as well as lights in this picture. The songs of the troubadours abound with impious allusions, extravagant hyperboles, and trivial conceits—above all, with such licentiousness of expression as renders a large number of them unfit for perusal. The ladies, who never appeared in society till after marriage, were proud of the celebrity which accrued to their charms from the number and desperation of their lovers, and the songs of their troubadours; nor were they offended if licentiousness mingled with gallantry in the poems composed in their praise.

At first sight, it seems strange that the same authors yielded an implicit belief in abstract theology, and advocated the most hideous immorality; that they addressed prayers to saints, and even to the Saviour himself; yet not to implore their mediation with offended Deity, but to aid some amorous intrigue;

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\* For a brief description of the Courts of Love, and of some amusing cases which were tried in them, see Longfellow's *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, p. 408, and *Retrospective Review*, vol. v., pp. 70–86.

that married women of the highest rank publicly gave their sanction to the violation of conjugal fidelity; and men, seemingly rational, resigned themselves to the wildest transports of passion for individuals whom, in some cases, they had never seen. This religious enthusiasm, martial bravery, and licentious love, mingled in strange grotesque, was the very life of the middle age; and impossible as it is to transfuse into a translation the harmony of Provençal verse, or to find in it, when stripped of this harmony, any idea worth entertaining as poetical, the value of these remains consists mainly in this—that they present us with a living, breathing picture of life and manners as they then prevailed. The poets were profane, because, from their tenderest infancy, they had been familiarized with the abuse of sacred names and sacred emblems; they gave free scope to their passions, because their spiritual guides sanctioned it by their example, and encouraged it by their venality. The institutions of chivalry, the fascination of tourneys, and the fanaticism of crusades, had turned their heads, and caused them to live in an ideal world. From the false direction of the intellect to the abandonment of moral duty, the transition is easy and inevitable. It existed, doubtless, before the institution of the Courts of Love; but so far as we know, it had never been either openly proclaimed or formally justified. It was reserved for them to institute the charter, the decalogue, the statutes of libertinage. Assuming the form and exercising the power of ordinary tribunals, they defined and prescribed the mutual duties of the sexes, and taught the arts of love and song according to the most depraved moral principles, mingled, however, with an affected display of refined sentimentality. Whatever their utility in the advancement of the language and the cultivation of literary taste, it must be admitted that these institutions extended a legal sanction to vice, and inculcated maxims of shameful profligacy.

Thus much we have deemed it necessary to premise concerning the moral character of the troubadour poetry, that the reader may not form a false conception of it from our selections, which are to be from among the least exceptionable.

The earliest of the troubadour poets whose songs are still extant, was WILLIAM EARL OF POICTIERS and Duke of Aquitaine,\* a powerful nobleman and gay libertine of the eleventh century. His compositions, remarkable for the harmony of their versification, and for the elegant mixture of their measures and rhymes, are considered the best studies for those who would understand the construction of the Provençal poetry. The following is his description of two favorite horses :—

“ Dos cavals ai a ma selha ben e gen ;  
 Ben son et ardit per armas e valen,  
 E no'ls puese amdos tener, que l'us l'autre no cossen.  
 Si'ls pogues adomesgar a mon talen,  
 Ja non volgr' alhors mudar mon garnimen,  
 Que miels fora cavalgatz de nul home viven.  
 L'uns fon dels montaniers lo plus corren,  
 Mas tan fera estranheza ha longuamen,  
 Et es tan fers e salvatges que del ballar se defen.  
 L'autre fon noyritz sa jos pres Colofen,  
 Et auc no vis bellazor, mon escien ;  
 Aquest non er ja comjatz per aur ni per argen.”

The reader may compare it with the following close, though not elegant translation :—

Two well-bred coursers in my stable are,  
 Fiery and fit for tournaments and war.  
 I cannot manage both—they madden in the car.

Could I subdue them, or by force or fear,  
 I would not barter them for monarchs' gear.  
 I should be better horsed than any cavalier.

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\* Born 1071, died 1122.



The one is fleetest of the mountaineers,  
And so untamable, so fierce appears,  
The boldest cavalier may tremble when he rears.

His mate was nourished close by Colophine—  
A nobler animal was never seen ;  
His worth may not be told in gold or brass, I ween.

In the sequel, we find our man of pleasure suddenly renouncing love, chivalry, the world and its follies, and devoting himself to the monastic life. He announces his resolution in terms too clear to be misunderstood, and too pathetic to be suspected of insincerity—

Once more I am disposed to sing,  
And I will touch a mournful string,  
For never more shall I be king  
Of Poictiers, of Limousi.

In exile I shall pass my life ;  
I leave my son to civil strife,  
Where fearful accidents are rife—  
Each vassal will his foeman be.

Since I must part, though much I grieve,  
To Falcon of Anjou I leave  
My lands in trust : he will receive  
His cousin and them in custody.

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Feats of valor were my pride ;  
But now those feats I lay aside.  
In him alone my hopes abide  
Whom pilgrims pray for clemency.

I pardon crave from my companion  
If wrong to him or his I've done ;  
And succor ask from God's own Son  
In Latin and in Romanzy.



I leave my sports and pleasures gay,  
 My lordly trappings, rich array,  
 The sembelin, the vair, the gray—  
 The monkish costume now for me.

We have said that a lordly troubadour was generally attended by a jongleur, who sang his verses for him, or accompanied his voice with an instrument. There seem also to have been, especially after the intercourse of Christendom with the East, a set of musicians who travelled on their own account, and varied the entertainment by the recitation of tales in prose, and the performance of feats of jugglery and sleight of hand. In the following fragment, the accomplishments of such a functionary are catalogued :—

All the minstrel art I know—  
 I the viol well can play,  
 I the pipe and syrinx blow,  
 Harp and gigue my hand obey ;  
 Psalter, symphony, and rote,  
 Help to charm the listening throng ;  
 And Armonia lends its note  
 While I warble forth my song.

I have tales and fables plenty,  
 Satires, pastorals, full of sport ;  
 Songs to Vielle, I've more than twenty,  
 Ditties too of every sort.  
 I from lovers tokens bear,  
 I can flowery chaplets weave ;  
 Amorous belts can well prepare,  
 And with courteous speech deceive.

A jongleur, by repeating verses, not unfrequently learned to compose them ; and if he was so happy as to produce what pleased the celebrated beauties of the day, some duke or count made him a knight ; and a knight who was master of the Gai-Saber became rightfully a troubadour. It happened, therefore,

even in the palmy days of Provençal poetry, that a troubadour was one raised by his talents and the favor of his master to the position which he held. BERNARD DE VENTADOUR,\* for instance, the most tender, and, at the same time, the most profane and licentious of the Provençal poets, was originally an obscure vassal, born in the château of the Count de Ventadour, his father being the man whose business it was to heat the oven. But Bernard had a natural talent for poetry, and a fine voice: he ventured to compose verses, dedicated them to his mistress, and succeeded. After some time, the count committed his lady to a dungeon of the château, and banished the troubadour, who quietly transferred himself and his verses to the court of Eleonore of Guienne, who, after her separation from Louis VII. of France, was married to Henry of Anjou, Duke of Normandy, who acceded to the English throne. Not being permitted to follow her to England, he transferred himself to the court of Raymond, Count of Toulouse; and after a life passed in the sunshine of royal favor, finished, like his betters, by secluding himself in a cloister. In the following strophes of his, the variations in the metres of the original have been strictly preserved:—

When zephyr's gently sailing  
 From mansion of my love,  
 Methinks I am inhaling  
 The sweets of Eden's grove.  
 'Tis she the illusion causes  
 To whom my hopes aspire,  
 Where my fond heart reposes  
 Its confidence entire.  
 For her I have relinquished  
 All others once so dear,  
 One passion hath extinguished  
 A thousand kindled here.

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\* Lived in the last half of the twelfth century.

With her and her affection,  
 Her eyes and face divine;  
 The sum of all perfection,  
 I deemed God's self was mine!  
 Yet why of this remind thee?  
 I'm not of kings' descent;  
 'Twas hard to have resigned thee,  
 'Tis harder to repent.  
 For once—'twas when we parted—  
 Thou saidst the good are strong;  
 They struggle broken-hearted,  
 The bad resist not long.

What meditates my fair  
 'Gainst one so fond as I?  
 Why doom me to despair,  
 Or yearning doom to die  
 O thou so debonnaire,  
 Vouchsafe one kind regard,  
 One smile that may repair  
 The wrongs that weigh so hard.  
 More ills I could not bear—  
 Why overwhelm thy bard?

ARNAUD DE MARVEIL, esteemed the most elegant of the Provençals, was also born in a humble rank of life, from which he was elevated by his talents. He was attached to the court of Roger II., Viscount of Beziers; and the love which he conceived for the countess is said to have been the means of developing his talents, and directing the destiny of his life. The remains of his poetry are considerable, and exhibit easy versification, with much tenderness of sentiment. The following is a short specimen of his style:—

All I behold recalls the memory  
 Of her I love. The freshness of the hour,  
 The enamelled fields, the many-colored flower,  
 Speaking of her, move me to melody.

Had not the poets with their courtly phrase  
Saluted many a fair of meaner worth,  
I could not now have rendered thee the praise  
So justly due, of "Fairest of the earth."  
To name thee thus had been to speak thy name,  
And waken o'er thy cheek the blush of modest shame.

PIERRE VIDAL\* has been called the Don Quixote of the troubadours. Love and vanity appear to have turned his brain, and persuaded him that he was the beloved of every lady, and the bravest of knights. He followed King Richard to the third Crusade, during which he was induced to marry a Greek lady, who gave herself out for a descendant of one of the families which had filled the throne of Constantinople. This circumstance afforded Vidal sufficient ground for believing that he was himself entitled to the imperial purple; and he forthwith assumed the title of emperor, and bestowed that of empress upon his wife. He had a throne carried before him, and determined to devote the produce of his professional labors as a troubadour to provide the means of conquering his dominions. On his return to Provence, a new attachment led him into a still wilder piece of extravagance. He imagined himself adored by a lady of Carcassonne, whose name was Loba; on which account he assumed the surname of *Lop*, the Provencal for *wolf*; and to secure his title to the appellation, he clothed himself in a wolf's skin, and excited the shepherds to chase him with dogs over the mountains. It is said that he persevered in submitting to be the object of this sport, till he was carried half dead to the feet of his mistress, and that she was cruel enough not to be so greatly moved as he expected by this singular demonstration of his devoted affection.

In perusing these snatches from the erotic poems of this school, the reader must be struck with the perpetual recurrence

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\* Died in 1229.



of the same ideas, the perfect monotony which prevails throughout, and the absence of everything like natural sentiment. But we should form a false estimate if we supposed this was their only style. True, the earliest effusions of the Provençal muse were chiefly of this character; but it gradually assumed a wider range, and became a sort of liberty of the press in opposition to feudal despotism and clerical intolerance. Some of the troubadours were men inspired with what we will venture to call popular feeling; and these, animated by a musical taste, and favored by a sonorous language, though perhaps inspired with little poetic genius, composed verses in which they praised or reviled the neighboring lord of the manor according to his merit, the ingenious vivacity of their productions procuring them a ready reception. Such men diffused mirth, satire, and insult together; and, through their instrumentality, mind obtained a certain degree of ascendancy over physical force, even in an age when the latter was so powerful. We should ill understand those stirring times, if we had no representation of them but what is furnished by the monkish historians, who clothed their facts in the stateliness of court etiquette, and added the falsely quiet colors which had no existence but in their own cells. The popular poetry of the day shows the other side, and reveals to us what treatment was sometimes dealt by the humble minstrel to the proud baron, or by him, in his turn, to the German emperor, or the kings of Aragon, Castile, or France, whom history depicts only as despots at the head of their numerous devoted vassals, and in the pomp of their stately courts. If any one supposes that none but the popes assumed the right of anathematizing and insulting the monarchs of Europe, and that every other knee was bent before them, he has but to consult the troubadours to form a very different judgment.

As an example of this liberty, we may refer to the cele-



brated poem of SORDELLO OF MANTUA, in which he deploras the fate of Blacas, his patron, whose heart, he says, ought to be divided among the pusillanimous princes of Europe, to stimulate them to maintain their rights, and avenge the injustice to which they so patiently submitted.

In this sad verse I Blacas' death lament,  
 With heart oppressed, and too just cause of grief;  
 For I have lost in him a friend and chief;  
 And worth and valor fill his monument.  
 So vast a loss may never be replaced,  
 Or only thus: let's parcel out his heart,  
 Let every quaking baron eat his part,  
 And he will feel his lagging courage braced.

First, let the Roman emperor partake—  
 For, faith, he needs it much—yes, let him eat,  
 If Milan's saucy varlets he would beat,  
 Who boast they made his German boors to quake.  
 And next, let Louis taste: he may regain  
 Castile, whose crown he lost through want of wit;  
 But then his mother!—he'll not taste a bit  
 Lest he should cause his gentle mammy pain.

Thy monarch, England, cowardly and dull,  
 Should of the dish a copious dinner make;  
 And thus inspired, he might the lands retake  
 The French kings cribbed, well knowing he was null.  
 Thy prince, Castile, should eat of it for twain,  
 Since he two kingdoms holds, not fit for one;  
 But if he tastes, let it by stealth be done,  
 For if his mother knew, she'd beat him with a cane.

I wish that Aragon would taste it too,  
 And from the foul dishonor be relieved  
 Which at Versailles and Milan he received;  
 No remedy but this, whate'er he do.

Next, let Navarre of the brave heart partake,  
 More valued as a count than king, I've heard.  
 When man by God to such high state's preferred,  
 'Tis pity that faint heart should make him quail and quake.

Thy count, Toulouse, hath also need of it:  
 Let him remember what he was and is;  
 If he no stouter heart acquire than his,  
 Of all he lost he'll ne'er regain a whit.  
 Avignon's count should vindicate his share;  
 A lackland count in small esteem is held;  
 For though by native courage he's impelled,  
 He needs an ample slice such sad reverse to bear.

Few of the wrathful effusions of the troubadours, usually called *Sirventes*, are so delicate in their raillery as this. They are, for the most part, bitter and virulent in the extreme, and without any regular train of thought. Their language, also, is so elliptical that it is often difficult to gather the meaning. The poet seems to have given rein to the passion of the moment, and to have used the words that came first to hand, as though he scorned to select his expressions. Here is no mark of the study which characterizes the *chansons*: what is gained in vigor is lost in harmony.

One of the great masters of this style was BERTRAND DE BORN,\* a belligerent knight, whose turbulent passions kept the provinces of Guienne in arms during the latter half of the twelfth century, and distracted the royal family of England, setting the sons of Henry II. against each other, and both against their father. Bertrand was Viscount of Hautfort, a small domain which he inherited conjointly with his brother Constantine. But not content with his own share, he endea-

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\* Born between 1140 and 1150. Died in 1199. He paid poetical homage to Eleanor Plantagenet, sister of Richard Cœur-de-Lion.—See Mrs. Jameson's *Lives of the Poets*, pp. 30–32.

vored to despoil his brother, in doing which he was obliged to contend with a number of princes and nobles, who zealously espoused the cause of Constantine, and among whom was Richard, son of the king of England. Whenever Bertrand was overcome, he made the best treaty he could, and immediately formed new alliances to renew the war, giving vent to his passions, at the same time, in a sirvente, which sustained his own hopes, animated his vassals, and encouraged his allies. The following piece, which is ascribed to him, is considered a fine specimen of the martial ode :—

I love thy genial season, Spring,  
 That renovates the leaves and flowers ;  
 I love to hear the sweet birds sing,  
 And their wild notes re-echoing  
 Through woods and copse, their native bowers ;  
 It joys me on the meads to see  
 Tents and pavilions glittering ;  
 My heart is filled with ecstasy,  
 When I behold midst ranged battalions  
 Bold cavaliers on fiery stallions.

It joys me when the light-armed troop  
 Make shepherds and their flocks decamp ;  
 It joys me when behind the group  
 I hear the soldiers swear and stamp ;  
 And, more than all, it charms me, too,  
 When I beleaguered castles view ;  
 Their strong walls tumbling,  
 Splintered, rumbling ;  
 The host in serried ranks  
 Marshalled on the banks  
 Of ditches palisaded round,  
 With stakes thick planted in the ground.

I could embrace the valiant peer,  
 Who, nothing slack,  
 Leads the attack,  
 On his armed steed, unblanched with fear ;

For thus he doth inspire  
His men with kindred fire.  
When in the camp he sets his foot,  
Each should with shouts the chief salute ;  
With heart and hand his word obey,  
And follow where he leads the way ;  
For none in glory's record lives,  
Till many a blow he takes and gives.

When the stour begins to thicken,  
Blades, lances, helms of various hue,  
And shivered bucklers we shall view ;  
Serfs together, striking, stricken,  
Men and steeds confusedly lying,  
Panting, gasping, dead, and dying ;  
For when the hurly-burly warms,  
No other thought high barons have  
But splitting skulls and slashing arms :  
Death, not inglorious life, befits the brave.

Meat, drink, and sleep are not, I swear,  
To me so welcome or so sweet,  
As when from either side I hear—  
“Charge ! charge ! my boys !” As when I meet  
Dismounted steeds in forests neighing,  
Or scattered squadrons succour praying ;  
Or when I view the great and small,  
On sward or moat promiscuous fall ;  
Or mangled corpses that appear  
With flanks transpierced by sword and spear.

The most interesting incident of Bertrand's career, was his alliance with the young Prince Henry, whose premature death he mourns in two poems. One of these is especially distinguished, as exhibiting the ingenuous grief of a soldier who blushes for the tears he sheds ; while it presents a lively description of the characteristics of the friend whom he deplores. The following is part of it :—

I terminate my lays in deep despair,  
 Which time nor circumstance can e'er allay;  
 My reason and my joys have passed away  
 With him, the noblest king e'er mother bare.

\* \* \* \*

Halbert and blade,  
 August brocade,  
 Pourpoint and pennon,  
 Helm and gonfalon,  
 Love and revelry,  
 Who will now your rights maintain?  
 Who your dignity sustain?  
 These are gone for ever with thee.  
 Yes! with thee they're passed away,  
 And wealthy recreants bless the day.

Gracious he was, and ready to oblige;  
 "God speed you, sir!" to every guest he said.  
 His palace was well kept; his serfs well paid,  
 Were all polite, but never wronged a liege.

The viol and song  
 Did the feast prolong,  
 And round the board,  
 With dainties stored,  
 A noble company.  
 The best of all the world was there.  
 Where are they vanished? Tell me where?  
 In this vile age of penury,  
 Where scarce one generous soul we meet,  
 Who can with Henry's fame compete?

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It is said, that being afterwards defeated by the forces of the English king, and brought as a prisoner before him, he was asked: "Is this you who boasted of having so much spirit?" upon which Bertrand replied: "I could do so once, but in losing your son, I have lost all that I had both of spirit and dexterity." The king burst into tears, and restored to the fallen warrior his liberty and his château.



Nor was this turbulent soul less susceptible of love than of friendship. One of the objects of his attachment was Maenz de Montagnac, the wife of Talleyrand de Perigord, to whom he addressed a song, which appears to possess considerable originality. It exhibits the knight of those days busied in war and in the chase, yet esteeming everything light in comparison of his love—

I cannot hide from thee how much I fear  
The whispers breathed by flatterers in thine ear  
Against my faith. But turn not, oh, I pray!  
That heart so true, so faithful, so sincere,  
So humble and so frank, to me so dear,  
Oh, lady! turn it not from me away.

So may I lose my hawk, ere he can spring,  
Borne from my hand by some bold falcon's wing,  
Mangled and torn before my very eye,  
If every word thou utterest does not bring  
More joy to me than Fortune's favoring,  
Or all the bliss another's love might buy.

So, with my shield on neck, 'mid storm and rain,  
With vizor blinding me, and shortened rein,  
And stirrups far too long, so may I ride,  
So may my trotting charger give me pain,  
So may the hostler treat me with disdain,  
As they who tell those tales have grossly lied.

When I approach the gaming-board to play,  
May I not turn a penny all the day;  
Or may the board be shut, the dice untrue,  
If the truth dwell not in me when I say,  
No other fair e'er wiled my heart away  
From her I've long desired and loved—from you!

Or, prisoner to some noble, may I fill,  
Together with three more my dungeon chill,  
Unto each other odious company;

Let master, servants, porters, try their skill,  
 And use me for their target if they will,  
 If ever I have loved aught else but thee.

So may another knight make love to you,  
 And so may I be puzzled what to do ;  
 So may I be becalmed 'mid oceans wide ;  
 May the king's porter beat me black and blue,  
 And may I fly ere I the battle view,  
 As they that slander me have grossly lied !

Bertrand also ended his days in a monastery ; but if we are to believe Dante, this epilogue of his turbulent life did not suffice to atone for the crime he had committed in embroiling the royal family of England. The Italian poet met him in the infernal regions more than a hundred years after his stormy career on earth was ended, and heard him sing—

“ Now, behold  
 This grievous torment, thou who, breathing, goest  
 To spy the dead : behold, if any else  
 Be terrible as this. And that on earth  
 Thou may'st bear tidings of me, know that I  
 Am Bertrand, he of Born, who gave King John  
 The counsel mischievous. Father and son  
 I set at mutual war. For Absalom  
 And David, more did not Ahitophel,  
 Spurring them on maliciously to strife.  
 For parting those so closely knit, my brain  
 Parted, alas ! I carry from its source  
 That in this trunk inhabits. Thus the law  
 Of retribution fiercely works in me.”

*Inferno*, Canto xxviii.

That bold and free character of the Provençal muse—that prerogative of reproof and satire which it exercised against the temporal powers of the middle age, is equally conspicuous in its opposition to a stronger than all—the theological and monastic influence. It is singular to observe the temerity with which, in those times which we figure to ourselves as so submis-

sive, so respectful, and so superstitious, not only abuses, but even holy things are turned to ridicule; and this not merely in pleasantry, but with downright malice. In the earliest rudiments of the Romance languages may be discovered the first indications of a feeling of religious independence; and we could hail it with delight, were it not so intimately associated with profanity. The sirventes are filled with invectives against the clergy and the court of Rome; and if but a tenth part of their reproaches are well founded, this era must have been the culmination of moral depravity. Very few of these pieces are fit for perusal.

The following is by WILLIAM FIGUEIRAS :—

Our pastors, well I know,  
Like wolves, our spoils divide.  
Semblance of peace they show,  
Yet rob on every side.  
With fawning smiles  
They, night and day,  
Their simple flock entice;  
But when inveigled in their wiles,  
They throw the mask away,  
And hurl them down the precipice.

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Shouldst thou the truth relate,  
They will impugn thy zeal;  
Cursed and excommunicate,  
Their vengeance thou wilt feel.  
If thou hast nought to give,  
Hope not with them to live  
In love or amity.  
Holy Maria! I appeal to thee;  
Blessed Virgin, grant, I pray,  
That I may see the day  
May terminate their wickedness,  
And men and women fear them less.

It would appear, however, that some of the poets knew how

to draw a line of distinction between religion itself and its unworthy ministers; and had religious feeling, but of a character too like that which belonged to their ancient heathenism. A few of the numerous orisons which remain are veritable curiosities, in which it is not unusual to find invocations to the Virgin and the saints, backed by formidable threatenings, or urged with protestations of devoted love, no less ardent and free than those which the authors addressed to their mistresses; a *mélange* of phrases familiar and respectful, a confession of private vices at once shocking and ridiculous, betraying rather the callousness of men accustomed to profligacy, than the contrition of the genuine penitent.

The Crusades formed another favorite theme of Provençal poetry. While the zeal of the faithful was aroused by the Christian pulpit, while kings and chiefs were summoned by letters from Rome, the voice of the troubadours—sometimes in irony and malice, sometimes in a style of devotion approaching the hymnology of the Hebrews—lent its inspiration to the adventure; and it may be doubted whether the following, by RAIMBAUD DE VAQUEIRAS, was not worth all the bulls of Urban II., and all the homilies of Peter the Hermit:—

He who created heaven, earth, sea, and air,  
 Heat, cold, wind, rain—who bade the thunder roll,  
 Wills that we cross the main 'neath the control  
 Of this brave chieftain, as the magi were  
 Star-led to Bethlehem. For the Paynim sword  
 Lays waste the mount and plain; yet God is mute.  
 We, we the sacred birthplace must dispute—  
 We for whose sake he on the cross was gored.  
 He who remains behind and spurns our suit,  
 Wills vile existence at his soul's expense.  
 Our sins condemn us—dread the consequence:  
 Who bathes in Jordan's flood is purged of his offence.

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Heartless is he who without deep dismay  
 Can brook the Moslem's wrongs, the Moslem's pride,  
 Who keeps the land where Jesus lived and died.  
 St. Nicholas be our guide! Do thou, Champagne,  
 Unfurl thy banners. Let the marquis cry,  
 Montferrat! let the Flemish count reply,  
 Flanders! and strike their bucklers till they strain.  
 Shivered at every blow be lance and sword.  
 Thus shall the vaunting Moslems be o'erthrown,  
 Jerusalem and the cross be yet our own—  
 The cross so vilely lost! Let Spain's brave lord,  
 Now firmly seated on his ancient throne,  
 Assault, expel the Moors! Thou, Boniface,  
 Attack the sultan in Byzantium's place.  
 Hark! from the heaven of heavens the Saviour's voice!  
 "Arm, arm, my sons! my tomb and cross redeem!"  
 He who would commune in the skies with Him  
 Fears not to die, assured he will rejoice  
 In Paradise. Let each his means employ  
 To pass the seas—the Moslem dogs destroy.

Some of the troubadours themselves assumed the cross; others were detained in Europe by the bonds of love; and the conflict between passion and religious enthusiasm lent its interest to the poems which they composed to animate their brethren.

But it is impossible to speak of the Holy War in connexion with troubadour poetry, without remembering RICHARD I., the darling of all the Crusaders, and the story told of him, that when he was detained a prisoner in Germany, Blondel, his minstrel, discovered the place of his captivity by singing beneath the fortress one stanza of a *tenson* which he and Richard had composed in common, and to which Richard now at once answered by commencing the second. If this poem had been preserved, the story would probably not have been considered apocryphal, as it is by many historians. That



Richard was a troubadour, however, is certain, as there remain some songs of his, one of which was written in prison :—

No wretched captive of his prison speaks,  
Unless with pain and bitterness of soul ;  
Yet consolation from the Muse he seeks,  
Whose voice alone misfortune can control.  
Where now is each ally, each baron, friend,  
Whose face I ne'er beheld without a smile ?  
Will none, his sovereign to redeem, expend  
The smallest portion of his treasures vile ?

Though none may blush that, near two tedious years,  
Without relief, my bondage has endured—  
Yet know, my English, Norman, Gascon peers,  
Not one of you should thus remain immured :  
The meanest subject of my wide domains,  
Had I been free, a ransom should have found :  
I mean not to reproach you with my chains,  
Yet still I wear them on a foreign ground !

Too true it is—so selfish human race !  
“ Nor dead nor captive, friend or kindred find ;”  
Since here I pine in bondage and disgrace,  
For lack of gold my fetters to unbind :  
Much for myself I feel, yet, ah ! still more  
That no compassion from my subjects flows ;  
What can from infamy their names restore,  
If, while a prisoner, death my eyes should close ?

But small is my surprise, though great my grief,  
To find, in spite of all his former vows,  
My lands are ravaged by the Gallic chief,  
While none my cause has courage to espouse.  
Though lofty towers obscure the cheerful day,  
Yet through the dungeon's melancholy gloom  
Kind Hope, in gentle whispers, seems to say :  
“ Perpetual thralldom is not yet thy doom.”

Ye dear companions of my happy days,  
Of Chail and Pensavin, aloud declare  
Throughout the earth, in everlasting lays,  
My foes against me wage inglorious war.  
O tell them too, that ne'er, among my crimes,  
Did breach of faith, deceit, or fraud appear;  
That infamy will brand to latest times  
The insults I receive while captive here.

Know, all ye men of Anjou and Touraine,  
And every bachelor knight, robust and brave,  
That duty, now, and love, alike are vain,  
From bonds your sovereign and your friend to save;  
Remote from consolation, here I lie,  
The wretched captive of a powerful foe,  
Who all your zeal and ardor can defy,  
Nor leaves you aught but pity to bestow.

This song is preserved in the dialect of the *trouvères*, of which we are presently to speak, as well as in that of the *troubadours*; and it is not known in which it was originally composed.

The language of Provence having been, as we have said, adopted in several of the courts of Europe, was considerably enriched by locutions from other dialects; and before the end of the twelfth century, was the most eclectic and polished in Europe. From this time, however, its poetry began to decline. The *troubadours* had few resources within themselves, and none of a foreign character; and their profession having become, to a certain extent, a mercenary and vulgar one—a means of subsistence instead of an elegant pastime—fell into disesteem. It is difficult to say what would have been the fate of the language under these circumstances, whether it would have frittered itself away, or have lent inspiration to some one whose genius would have endowed it with immortality, had not public events occurred which hastened its downfall, and reduced it to the condition of a mere provincial dialect.

Among the numerous sects which sprang up in Christendom during the first ages, there was one which, though bearing different names at different times, bore the same general features, and more or less resembled what is now known as Protestantism, but, in the sixth century, "Paulicienne;" and in the twelfth and thirteenth, the "Faith of the Albigenses," as it prevailed most widely in the district of Albi. It easily came to be identified with the Provençal language, as this was the chosen vehicle of its religious services. After the oaths of 842 A. D., of which we are presently to speak, one of the most ancient specimens of romance language is a simple and pious paraphrase of Gospel maxims, entitled *The Noble Lesson of the Vaudois*. It contains no heretical doctrine, but betrays a spirit of free inquiry, and sense of individual responsibility.

This sect was tolerated, and even protected, by the Count of Toulouse; it augmented its members; it devoted itself to commerce and the arts, and added much to the wealth and prosperity which had long distinguished the south of France from the military rudeness of the north. The sanctuaries of the Albigenses were frequented, their hymns in the vulgar tongue resounded through the country, and their faith long lived peaceably side by side with the Catholic in the same cities and villages. But Innocent III. having ascended the papal throne and cast his eyes abroad, espied this little people in a corner of southern France, attending lay-preachers, praying in the vulgar tongue, and appearing thus to renounce the supremacy of the old language, and of religious and political Rome. He sent legates to Provence, who preached, discussed, threatened, and met in freedom of thought a resistance of mere authority which Rome was not accustomed to brook. Bitter controversy was now substituted for the amiable frivolity of tençons, and theological disputes superseded those on points of gallantry. At the palace of Raymond of Toulouse, the legates found troubadours, musicians, jongleurs, and hymn-

singing heretics, mingled together under his generous patronage. They demanded of him the punishment of his nonconforming subjects; and while he hesitated, the assassination of a legate at an inn on the banks of the Rhône furnished occasion for the preaching of a new crusade. Raymond himself was forced to take part in it; the long struggle between the poetry of the troubadours and the preaching of the monks now came to a crisis; the bitter satires which the disorderly lives of the clergy had called forth became more bitter still; and the songs of the troubadours wounded the pride and power of Rome more deeply than ever, while they stimulated the Albigenses to a valiant resistance or a glorious death. But poetry was no match for the sword and lance when matters came to an extremity; and the result of the conflict was the annexation of Toulouse to the crown of France.\*

In this chaos of events, what became of the songs and the sighings of love? It was impossible for the enamored knight any longer to travel from château to château singing his elaborate verses, and dedicating them to the noble ladies whom they celebrated. With the circumstances of the times, the imagination of the people had seemed to undergo a change; it submerged in those waves of blood; and even when the dreadful strife was over, Provençal poetry never again displayed its graceful vivacity.

The language of Provence was destined to share the same fate with its poetry. It became identified in the minds of the orthodox with heresy and rebellion. About the middle of the thirteenth century, Charles of Anjou, having acquired the kingdom of Naples, drew thither in his train the principal families of the Provençal nobility, and thus drained the kingdom of those who had formerly maintained its chivalrous manners. The Courts of Love were consequently done away,

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\* See Sismondi's *Literature of Southern Europe*, chap. vi.



and the tourneys became few and unattractive. A still more deadly blow to the Provençal was the removal of the court of Rome to Avignon at the beginning of the fourteenth century; for though the successive popes who resided there for seventy years, were all natives of Southern France, yet their retinues were composed of Italians, and the Tuscan superseded the Provençal in the circles of fashion.

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## II.—THE TROUVÈRES.\*

RISE OF THE LANGUE D'OIL OR ROMANCE WALLON—IT MERGES INTO NORMAN-FRENCH—CHIVALROUS ROMANCES—LAYS—ALLEGORICAL POEMS—FABLIAUX—HISTORICAL ROMANCES—LYRIC POETRY—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS—THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.

WHILE the Provençal, after a brilliant career of three centuries, was relapsing into the position of a mere dialect, the north of France was maturing a new language, and giving birth to literature of a different character.

The name of Waelchs or Walloons, which was given by the Germans to the inhabitants of this region, was essentially the same as that of Galli (Gauls), which they had received from the Latins, and of Kelti (or Celts), which they themselves acknowledged. Their language was called after them the Romance Wallon—that is, the vulgar tongue of the Walloons—and we have notices of its existence so early as the eighth century; but the most ancient specimen of it is the oath of Louis-le-Germanique,† and that of the subjects of Charles the Bald, in the year 842 A. D.

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\* *Trouvère* is simply a translation of the Provençal *troubadour*.

† “Pro Deo amor, et pro christian poblo, et nostro comun salvamento (salvament) dist di en avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si



The language of these celebrated oaths is almost as much like the Provençal as the Walloon of later times, leading to the conclusion that at this period the vulgar tongue was pretty nearly the same throughout the whole of France. But from the time that the formation of the kingdom of Arles divided the country into two independent and rival states, their languages became more and more dissimilar. When the Provençal received the designation of the *Langue d' Oc*, the Walloon was called the *Langue d' Oil* or *d' Oui*, just as the Italian was the *Langue de Si*, and the German the *Langue de Ya*.\*

The invasion of the Northmen, or Normans, in the tenth century, supplied the last, and perhaps the best element of this dialect. The victors adopted the language of the vanquished, but modified it by the addition of Teutonic locutions, and stamped on it the impress of their own genius. It thus became the Norman-French, which formed the basis of the language whose literature we are briefly to survey.

A century and a half after Northern France had submitted to Rollo, one of his descendants effected the conquest of England, and imposed this language on our forefathers, commanding that it should be taught before Latin in all the conventual schools, and should be the organ of civil administration throughout the country. In England, therefore, the popular French acquired by the sword of William a position which it did not enjoy at Paris: in the French capital, it was the dia-

salvarejo cist meon frade Karlo, et in adjudha, et in cadhuna cosa si cum om per dreit son fradre (fradra) salvar dist (legendum *dust*) in o quid il mi altre si fazet (qui id un altre si fazet), et ab Ludher nul plaid nunquam prindrai, qui meon vol cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit."

The oath of the French people runs thus:—"Si Loduigis sacrament, que son fradre Karlo jurat, conservat; et Karlus, meos sendra, de suo part non lo stanit; si io returnar non l'int pois, ne io, ne ceuls cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla ajudha contra Lodhuwig nun li iver."

\* *Oc*, *Oil* or *Oui*, *Si*, and *Ya*, are the Provençal, Walloon, Italian, and German, respectively for *yes*.

lect of the vulgar; while in the English, it was what Latin had long been on the Continent—the language of the court, of the government, and of course, therefore, of the educated classes generally. It is thus accounted for that England was the cradle of French literature. The first complete work in the French language, posterior only to the oaths above referred to, was the code of laws which William the Conqueror imposed on his English subjects in the latter half of the eleventh century.\*

As soon as poetry appeared in this dress, it displayed a novel and interesting character, widely different from the Provençal. It was not now an idle baron sighing for his lady-love, or an oppressed vassal venting his indignation at the tyranny of his master, but it was a nation of hardy warriors celebrating the prowess of their ancestors, with all the exaggeration that their fancy could supply. Here first we meet with those legends and romances of mediæval chivalry which have furnished the elements of the marvellous to the poets and romancers of succeeding ages.

The earliest, probably, of these, giving its own date in the

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\* The following extract is from a manuscript of about the same date:—  
 “Un hom estoit en la terre Us ki out nom Job. Parce est dit u li sainz hom demoroit ke li merites de sa vertut soit expresseiz. Quar ki ne sachet que Us est terre de paiens, et la paienie fut en tant plus enloïé (*inligatus*) de visces, ke de n'eout la conissance de son faiteor (*créateur*). Dunkes dict lom u il demorat par ke ses loi (*louange*) creisset; cant il fut bon entre les malvais.”

The following is from St. Bernard, who died in 1153:—Nos faisons vi, chier freire, l'encommencement de l'avent, cui nous est asseiz renomeiz et connis al monde, si come sunt li nom des autres solemnpniteiz. Mais li raison del nom nen est mies par aventure si conue. Car li chaitif fil d'Adam nen ont cure de vériteit ne de celes choses ka lor saluteit appartient, anz quierent icil les choses defaillans et trespessaules (*trespessantes*?). A quel gent ferons nos semblans les homes de ceste génération, ou a quel gent ewerons nous ceos cui nos veons estre si ahers et si enracineiz ens terriens solas et ens corporiens, kil de partir ne s'en puyent.”

text as the year 1155 A. D., is the *Book of the Britons*, or the *Romance of Brutus*, a fabulous history of the early kings of England, beginning with Brutus, the grandson of Æneas. This Brutus, after making many a long journey, and lighting on many an enchanted isle and gorgeous fairy palace, at length discovers England, establishes his family in it, and reigns gloriously. Here he finds King Arthur, the chivalric institution of the Round Table, and the enchanter Merlin, one of the most popular personages of the middle ages. Out of this legend arose a series of myths, including some of the boldest creations of the human fancy. The court of King Arthur was peopled with valiant knights, whose names became "familiar as household words" in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For instance, the *Romance of Merlin*, who was said to be the son of the devil by a Breton lady, describes the wars of Uther and Pendragon against the Saxon invaders of England, the birth and early life of Arthur, the miracles by which the prophet of chivalry consecrated the institution of the Round Table, and his predictions, which have served as well as the gravest chronicles for materials to the romance writers. The *Romance of Saint Graal*,\* by Christian de Troyes, mingles the records of sacred history with legends of British chivalry. It tells how the *saint-graal*, or holy cup, was carried to England, and came into the possession of Lancelot of the Lake, Galaar his son, Percival of Wales, and Boort, knights of the Round Table, of each of whom the history is given; and so of the rest, in which the adventures of the different heroes of this illustrious court are recounted with a curious mixture of simplicity and extravagance, gallantry and superstition.

Another family of romances are those which relate to the

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\* Poets have drawn nothing more beautiful from this legend than The Vision of Sir Launfal, by James Russell Lowell, and Sir Galahad by Tennyson.

wonderful exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve paladins. Many of these, also, have been rendered familiar to the modern reader by the works of later authors, especially Ariosto in the *Orlando Furioso*.\* We shall, therefore, here introduce a very ancient one which is little known, having been first published within the last twenty years from a manuscript in the British Museum. It is entitled *The Journey of Charlemagne to Jerusalem and Constantinople*. Every one knows that this monarch was never at either place; but the imagination of the twelfth century having endowed him with all the characteristics of greatness, and knowing none more signal than those connected with Eastern travel, made no difficulty as to the fact that these adventures were not known in the age of Charlemagne. The journey was occasioned, says the story, by a dispute between the monarch and his queen, which thus arose :—

Charles to Saint Denis' minster hastened now  
To be re-crowned; first on his ample brow  
He signed the cross, then on his thigh he bound  
His golden-hilted sword; assembled round  
Dukes, lords, knights, barons in attendance stood.  
The monarch with delight his champions viewed,  
Then turned elated to his youthful queen,  
Resplendent with her crown and regal sheen.  
He pressed her snow-white hand, and courteously  
Conducting her beneath an olive-tree,  
Thus gaily questioned her: "Now, lady, say,  
Hast thou e'er seen beneath the solar ray  
A monarch whom the crown so well became,  
Or sword so just an emblem of his fame?  
With this, I warrant, many a town I'll take!"  
The dame was reckless, and thus reckless spake:  
"In sooth, my liege, thou dost assume too much.  
Certes I have beheld, and often, such;

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\* See Mrs. Marsh's "Song of Roland, as chanted before the Battle of Hastings by Taillefer."



A king who when at court his crown he wears,  
 More graceful and more dignified appears."  
 Charlemagne, enraged, the simple queen surveyed;  
 The peers stood mute, the multitude dismayed.  
 "Ha! say'st thou? And this monarch, where bides he?  
 Reveal his name—reveal it instantly!  
 We'll see whose merit bears the palm away,  
 Or his or mine; let mutual umpires say.  
 Hie to his palace, with thy friends combine;  
 My knights and faithful Franks to them I'll join:  
 To their decision I will freely bow.  
 But if thou liest, 'twill cost thee dear, I trow;  
 I'll doff thy head with this well-tempered blade!"

The queen, now regretting her ill-timed banter, would fain have dropped the argument. She pretended she had forgot the name and country of the hero; but the king would take no denial. At length she mentioned Hugo, King of Byzantium; whereupon Charles summoned his peers, and told them that he required their attendance, with that of their vassals, in the performance of a long-resolved pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and that, after fulfilling this duty, he intended to seek out a king of whose wealth and prowess wonderful things had been told him.

The adventurers travelled by land through Burgundy, Bavaria, Hungary, Turkey, and Persia. Reaching Jerusalem at length, they visited the minster, where the officials took them for celestial visitants, till Charles explained:—

"Sire, I am Charles ycleped, in Gallia bred,  
 My knights and I twelve kings have vanquishèd;  
 The thirteenth now I seek, but known by fame.  
 Hither, by God inspired, I lately came,  
 The cross and holy sepulchre t'adore."

The king now asked and obtained a number of sacred relics, and in due time the party returned homewards by Constantinople.



Byzantium's far-famed city they behold,  
Its mosques and pinnacles bedecked with gold.  
On the right hand, upon a mountain's side,  
Groves of green laurels and of pines they spied;  
There the arbutus and the sweet rose bloomed,  
And fragrant aloes the pure air perfumed.  
Thousands of knights in silken robes they found,  
With ermine furred that trailed upon the ground.  
At chess and trictrac some of them were playing,  
Others with falcons and tame goshawks straying.

Charles, advancing on his mule, questioned Roland as to whether he had yet seen the king; and then, turning to a man who stood near him, he inquired where Hugo lived. Being directed to go forward to a tent which was pointed out, he spurred his beast, and presently, to his great surprise, discovered the monarch engaged in ploughing. The instrument was worthy of a king.

The shares, the coulter, wheels, were all of gold.  
With skill unerring he the ploughshare ruled.  
Two powerful mules a rich pavilion bore,  
Where, on a cushion, sat the emperor;  
Of eider-down the pillow was composed,  
Mantled with scarlet where his head reposed;  
A silver footstool on the carpet placed,  
With flowers and rich enamel was incased.  
A golden verge the valiant Hugo held,  
And so unerringly the share impelled,  
Each furrow was as straight as joiner's rule.  
Charlemagne, astonished, viewed him from his mule;  
Still Hugo urged the plough, for fain was he  
To finish his day's work, and speedil  
Charles doffs his cap, and greets him heartily.  
Hugo, lost in wonder, marks his warlike mien,  
His sinewy arms, and body lank and lean.  
"God save thee, sir! what favor dost thou claim?"  
"From France I come, and Charlemagne is my name.

My nephew Roland. From the Holy Land  
 Returning home with my victorious band,  
 Thee and thy chivalry I fain would know."  
 "In sooth," cries Hugo, "'tis seven years ago  
 Reports have reached me of a Frankish host  
 And knights well mounted, who approached our coast.  
 If such thy pleasure, here a twelvemonth bide,  
 Gold in abundance shall thy wants provide.  
 Now I'll unyoke my mules, that I may prove  
 How much I long to cultivate thy love."

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The palace and its splendor Charles surveyed ;  
 Chairs, tables, sofas—all of gold were made ;  
 Its walls, with azure silk and pictures graced,  
 Where serpents, beasts of prey, and birds were traced.  
 A well-proportioned dome surmounted all,  
 And shed soft radiance o'er the gorgeous hall.  
 One hundred columns, glorious to behold,  
 Girt the saloon ; two statues of pure gold,  
 Or polished brass, in front of each were seen.  
 Children they seemed in body and in mien ;  
 An ivory horn protruded from each mouth,  
 Which, when the breeze, or from the north or south,  
 Entered the palace, like a wheel turned round,  
 When down a hill it hurries to the ground.  
 O then the horns a mighty voice would yield,  
 Like drums or thunder, or loud chimes when pealed.  
 Each statue with a smile surveyed the other,  
 Alike in form, as brother to a brother.

Just then a gentle breeze began to blow  
 Right from the port, and at that moment, lo !  
 The horns revolved like axle of a mill,  
 And breathed sweet airs, the statues smiling still.  
 Some in high octaves, others soft and clear,  
 Thrilled in melodious accents on the ear.  
 In paradise the listeners seemed to be,  
 Where angels sing in joyous company.  
 Anon the gale increased ; it stormed, it hailed ;  
 The winds in vain the palace walls assailed,

Its lattices, of foreign crystal pure,  
With curtains well protected stood secure ;  
Within 'twas tranquil as the month of May  
When summer suns their genial beams display.

After a plentiful supper, in which

Nought was refused the Franks might please their taste :  
Wild boars and ven'son on the board were placed ;  
Geese, herons, peacocks, seasoned well with spice,  
Provoked their appetites, not overnice ;  
Claret in copious jugs their thirst allayed,  
And minstrels sung or on the rota played—

the guests prepared for rest.

But the wily Hugo had taken the precaution of hiding in the chamber a spy, who overheard when the guests, heated with wine, conversed (*gabbled*) freely among themselves, and boasted their superior strength, while they poured contempt on their wealthy entertainers. Next day, Hugo challenged them to verify their bravadoes, vowing that they should die unless each boaster performed the feat which he had vaunted. They venture all; and partly by miraculous aid, partly by cunning and opportune accidents, each contrives to perform, or to appear to have performed, his feat: whereupon the Byzantine monarch acknowledges Charles for his superior, and does him homage. Many of the details in this, as in most other tales of chivalry, are quite unfit for perusal.

It would not comport with the limits of the present work to enter on an inquiry into the origin of these wild romances, but it is easy to see how they may have arisen. The popular mind was struck, in the first instance, with the actual view of great men and great actions, as those of Charlemagne, and Alexander the Great, another favorite hero of chivalrous poetry. The history of these being traditionally handed down from one generation of story-tellers to another, during ages in

which there were no books, became exaggerated as the distance in point of time increased, and these fabrications came to occupy the place of historic record. It is worth remarking, that though an attempt was made to render the prowess of Rollo and his followers the subject of romantic narrative in the poem called the *Romance of the Roux*, yet it gave birth to no following imitations or amplifications. The events, probably, were too near and too familiar to be accepted as matter for poetical embellishment. But Charlemagne was a fine subject: his long reign; his prodigious activity; his splendid conquests; his wars with the Saracens; his influence in Germany, Italy, and Spain; and his re-establishment of a western empire—naturally rendered him an object of wonder and admiration to succeeding generations, who connected his name with all that was brilliant in achievement, even after the precise facts were forgotten. Anachronisms might be expected under the circumstances, and errors in geography occurred almost as matters of course. The feats of this hero were probably confounded with the earlier ones of Charles Martel, and supplemented, perhaps, with some Eastern lore and a few classic reminiscences of the west. Then the institutions of chivalry, when they appeared, formed a beautiful ideal amidst the hardness of feudal despotism; and the Crusades afforded such splendid examples of knightly devotion, that even as Alexander the Great was dubbed a knight, so the redoubtable Charlemagne made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The supernatural was easily added under these circumstances. In the infancy of nations, as of individuals, the love of the marvellous seems to be inherent, and Divine or Satanic interference affords the easiest and most agreeable explanation of every difficulty. This disposition had been fostered in the dark ages by the monkish legends of miracles and visions, and it would seem as though the charm of fiction and the habit of believing it had incapacitated the popular mind for relishing



sober and unadorned truth. Such, indeed, was the power and prevalence of these myths for ages afterwards, that Milton's first idea was to devote an epic to Arthur,\* as Ariosto had done to Charlemagne, till a happier thought induced him to relinquish the enchanter Merlin for the Evil One, and the conquest of Britain for Paradise Lost.

We are not to suppose that these fictions were the inventions of some master-minds of singular ingenuity. The poets seem only to have versified what every one believed, and hence, perhaps, it is that their biographies are obscure as compared with those of the troubadours. For it is to be observed, that though we now use the word *romance* as synonymous with a fictitious composition, yet originally it only meant a work in the Romance or modern dialect, as distinguished from the scholastic Latin; and there is little doubt that the knights who listened to the songs of the minstrel, "held each strange tale devoutly true."

And doubtless there is much verity amidst this mass of fiction. The mind of man invents very little incident in an absolute sense, even when it frames the most chimerical fables; and fiction is but composed of fragments of truth fancifully put together. There is no doubt that chivalry was a real institution, and that the moral features, the details of costume, the social usages, even the adventures so far as they are human and natural, are a faithful and exact expression of the age. This literature would not be worthy to occupy so much attention, did it not present the only picture of life in those days that it is now possible for us to attain. We could form no adequate conception of the hardness of feudalism but in viewing this cortège of warriors which supported it; these restless and ungovernable passions which were its very

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\* See an allusion to this in his *Epitaphium Damonis*.



life; and this sense of honor, this gallantry and religious enthusiasm, which were its highest ornament.

In the north of France, as in the south, princes and nobles lent their patronage to the minstrels or jongleurs, who, especially after the intercourse with the East, united the functions of musician and story-teller, mountebank and conjuror. According to a custom which may be traced to the highest antiquity, these professors of the art of pleasing were invited to table even in the kingly palace, and largely rewarded for the amusement they afforded. But whatever the charm which an extended romance was calculated to lend to the private chamber, the festive meeting required still lighter compositions, whose sallies of wit were rendered more piquant by brevity of style. Hence the *fabliaux*—which seem to have owed their origin to the patronage of the great—and the *lays*, which occupy an intermediate position between these and the romances.

MARIE OF FRANCE, who flourished in the middle of the thirteenth century, bears the palm in this species of composition. She was a classical scholar, and had spent some time in Britain, where she had conversed in their own language with the Welsh bards, to whom she confesses herself indebted for the matter of her lays. They are embodied in an easy, graceful, conversational style, without the tedious episodes and digressions which occur in the romances.\* The following will give some idea of her *Lay of Lanval*:—

I will another lay recite,  
Which oft I've heard in bower and hall;  
The hero is a wealthy knight,  
In Brittany yeleped Lanval.

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\* See in Costello's *Early French Poetry*, or in Longfellow's *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, the renowned *Lay of Bisclaveret*.

King Arthur was at Cardiff suppressing an irruption of the Piets and Scots; after which he rewarded the other knights of the Round Table with lands and honors, but Lanval remained unguerdoned; and as his private property was limited, while his chivalrous expenses were considerable, he found himself reduced to straits. He scorned to complain, however, and resolved to seek his fortune in other lands. Mounting his steed, and leaving the town, he reached a verdant meadow, watered by a streamlet clear as crystal:—

Here he ungirt his panting steed,  
And left to pasture on the grass;  
A pillow of his cloak he made,  
For wearied nature claimed repose,  
But sad reflections sleep forbade—  
Sleep flies a breast o'ercharged with woes.  
He marked the stream; and as he gazed,  
Beheld two beauteous maids advance;  
He saw, and at their charms amazed,  
Stole many a longing, lingering glance.  
Richly attired the damsels seemed;  
Close to their shapes each bodice laced;  
Their vermil scarfs at distance gleamed,  
And well displayed the forms they graced.  
The elder bore a golden ewer,  
Richly enamelled, quaintly wrought—  
I merely tell the truth, be sure—  
The younger a fair napkin brought.  
Directly towards the knight they sped;  
And he, well versed in courtesy,  
Sprang from the sward and bent his head;  
They smiled and curtsied graciously.  
“Sir knight,” they cried, “our lady fair  
Hath sent us with a message hither:  
So please you to her bower repair—  
We safely will conduct you thither.”

Following his guides, he was led to a splendid pavilion, in

which was a beautiful lady, who professed her love for him. After they had plighted their mutual faith, she bestowed on him a talisman, by virtue of which he should be able to procure wealth at pleasure. Only one condition she imposed upon him—he was never to reveal the secret of their attachment; if he did, he was to lose the wealth-giving power. Trusting him to find some spot where they might meet without observation, she dismissed him for the present, and he returned straight to Cardiff, where he freely indulged his taste for generous profusion, making presents to his friends, assisting the necessitous, and still finding his purse always replenished.

That year—'twas past the Baptist's day—  
The barons, in pure idleness,  
Repaired to where an orchard lay  
Skirting a tower, a lone recess,  
Where Queen Genevra took delight.

The queen, escorted by thirty of her maidens, left the tower to join them; and perceiving Lanval standing pensively apart from the rest—he was thinking of his absent love—she approached and accosted him, avowing a long-cherished attachment, and soliciting its return. That was refused. The queen, enraged, declared to her lord that she had been insulted by Lanval. He was accordingly apprehended by order of the monarch, and brought to trial. We pass by the preparations for this solemnity, and the distress of Lanval at finding that his indiscretion in revealing the secret had deprived him of the fairy's assistance. The critical moment arrives, and while the barons are considering their verdict, two beautiful damsels, on white palfreys, closely followed by two more, announce to the king a visit from their mistress:—

Anon, just as the court prepare  
To render judgment, through the town  
A lady, most surpassing fair—  
In Christendom no such was known—

On a white palfrey speeds apace.  
 The beast was of the noblest breed :  
 His head and neck he bears with grace,  
 Rich are the trappings of the steed ;  
 A king who would the like acquire,  
 Must sell or pledge his lands, I ween.  
 Now mark her beauty and attire :  
 A tissue of transparent sheen,  
 On either side by clasps confined,  
 Did partly veil and partly show  
 A form unmatched in womankind.  
 Whiter her neck than new-fallen snow ;  
 Her eyes were blue, complexion fair,  
 Her mouth and nose in symmetry,  
 Her eyebrows dark thou mightst compare  
 To bows just bent for archery ;  
 Light auburn locks her shoulder graced,  
 Her purple mantle loosely flowed,  
 A falcon on her hand was placed,  
 A greyhound followed where she rode.—  
 In all the city was not one,  
 Master or valet, young or old,  
 But left his wonted task undone,  
 Her wondrous beauty to behold.

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The lady to the palace wends,  
 Where never yet such beauty came ;  
 In Arthur's presence she descends,  
 And all who view admire the dame.  
 Her mantle she lets fall behind,  
 Her form the better to display.  
 The king in courtesy refined,  
 Rises to greet her sans delay ;  
 The courtiers make obeisance due,  
 Eager to serve her to their best.  
 From lip to lip her praises flew,  
 And every heart her power confessed.  
 At length she spake : " I here resort  
 To plead for one I love, Lanval.



He was neglected at thy court,  
 Alone forgot when guerdoned all;  
 His innocence I come to prove;  
 The queen hath wronged thy best in arms  
 He never sought nor wished her love.  
 Touching his boast—compare our charms.  
 If mine deserve the preference,  
 Then, barons, ye're in duty bound  
 To judge him guiltless of offence."

Lanval was forthwith absolved; and when the lady rode away, he closely followed her.

To Avalon, 'tis said, they went—  
 So sing the Britons in their lays;  
 There in each other's love content,  
 Remote from strife, they passed their days.

Besides lays, France owes to Marie a collection of fables, not indeed original as to the invention, but new in the mode of exhibition. They are in substance the same which have been repeated in all ages, from Esop to La Fontaine.\* Marie had few imitators in this species of composition; but perhaps her fables suggested the idea of those interminable allegories which fed the fancy and stimulated the curiosity of the French nation for three centuries. Unlike as they are to the fables both in form and extent, they are analogous in their object—

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\* LA MORS ET LI BOSQUILLON.

Tant de loin que de prez n'est laide  
 La mors. La clamoit à son ayde  
 Tosjors ung povre bosquillon  
 Que n'ot chevance ne sillon:  
 "Que ne viens, disoit, ô ma mie,  
 Finer ma dolorouse vie!"  
 Tant brama qu'advint; et de voix  
 Terrible: "Que veux-tu?" "Ce bois  
 Que m'aydiez à carguer, madame!"  
 Peur et labeur n'ont mesme game.



which was to clothe dangerous truth in a disguise which should secure its circulation. There is a personification, not of the lower animals, but of virtues, vices, political and religious principles, concealing bitter sarcasm, and generally a good moral inference.

The most celebrated, and probably the most ancient of these, is the *Romance of the Rose*\*—a work of 20,000 lines, commenced in the thirteenth century by GUILLAUME DE LORRIS, and continued fifty years later by JEAN DE MEUN. It is a dream, in which a host of allegorical personages appear to conduct the incidents of a tedious love affair. The object of attraction is the rose; Dame Oiseuse inspires the lover with a desire of finding it; Male-Bouche and Dangier mislead his search; while Felonie, Bassesse, Haine, and Avarice, throw obstacles in the way. The imagination is invited to wander thus among crowds of fictitious beings, the representatives of abstract ideas, in whom it is impossible to feel the interest that would have been excited by the most trivial display of human feeling and action. Then, unlike any previous poetry that we know of, the *Romance of the Rose* contains a great deal of learned lore; scholastic subtleties and scraps of ancient history mingle freely with abstractions and allegories: we meet, for instance, with the cruelties of Nero and the death of Seneca, as well as that of Lucretia; here a passage on alchemy; there a digression on Boethius and his book; now a chivalrous episode; and again a eulogium on St. Augustine. A few lines will give an idea of the state of the language at this time.†

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\* An account of Chaucer's translation of this poem may be found in Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, vol. ii. p. 230.

† Le temps qui s'en va nuyt et jour  
 Sans repos prendre et sans séjour,  
 Et qui de nous se part et emble  
 Si céleément, qu'il nous semble

This poem excited unbounded admiration in its day ; it was considered as a master-piece of wit, a splendid moral conception, a fine display of philosophy in the garb of poetry. The most general belief was, that it veiled the deepest theological mysteries from the merely sensuous reader, and, accordingly, learned commentaries were written to supply the key to these treasures of divine wisdom. Truth is, that every class of visionaries might find its own prototype in one or other of these allegorical personages ; and the mystic Rose might be either the golden dream of the alchemist, the occult science of the astrologer, or the beatific vision of the fanatic. The preachers of the day seem, in the first instance, to have been divided in their opinions as to its merits : some fulminated their censures of it as a corrupting volume ; others mingled quotations from it with those of holy writ. This amorous dream of De Lorris being afterwards used by Jean de Meun as the framework for a satire on all classes of society, and the clergy coming in for a large share, they made it the object of persecution enough to render it immortal.

The imitations of this poem were almost endless. One of the earliest was that of the *Trois Pèlerinages*—a dream of most appalling length, as each pilgrimage occupies 10,000 or 12,000 verses. The first is the pilgrimage of man, or human life on earth ; the second, the pilgrimage of the soul, or the life to come ; the third, the pilgrimage of Jesus Christ, or the life of our Lord.

Qu'il nous soit adés en un point,  
 Et s'il ne s'y arreste point,  
 Ains ne fine de trespasser,  
 Si que l'en (*l'on*) ne pourroit penser  
 Lequel temps c'est qui est présent ;  
 Ce le (*ne ?*) demand-je au clerc lysant,  
 Car ainçois (*avant*), qu'il eust ce pensez,  
 Seroit-il jà oultre passez.

About the same time appeared the *Bible Guyot* (Book of Guyot)—a bitterly satirical work of the same kind, containing the *Book of Mandevie* (Amendment of Life), the *Book of Clergie* (The Sciences), and many others of similar kind.\*

If we feel astonished at the patience of those who could peruse these long and stupid works, it may suffice to remember, that books were remarkably scarce in those days, and that a single volume was often the sole literary treasure of a large family circle, to whom it was read over and over, as often as reading was required to pass the long evening in court or hall. These allegories, then, served as riddles to stimulate the wit of the company, who speculated on the author's primary design, and ever and anon discovered new applications of his symbolic details. The scraps of ancient history and

\* The following are some of the introductory verses:—

Dou siècle puant et horrible  
 M'estuet commencer une bible (*livre*),  
 Por poindre (*piquer*) et por aiguilloner,  
 Et pour grant essample doner.  
 Ce n'iert (*sera*) pas bible losengière (*louangeuse*),  
 Mès fine et voire (*vraie*) et droiturière;  
 Mireor iert à toutes gens:  
 Ceste bible, or ne argenz  
 Esloingner de rien ne me puet,  
 Qar de Dieu et de raison muet (*se meut, provient*);  
 Ce que je veux conter et dire  
 Est sanz felonie et sanz ire.  
 Voldrai le siècle molt reprendre,  
 Et assaillir et reson rendre,  
 Et diz et essamples mostrer  
 Où tuit cil (*tous ceux*) se porront mirer  
 Qui entendue et créance ont:  
 Que toutes les ordres qui sont  
 Se porront mirer és biaux diz,  
 Et és biaux moz que j'ai escriz.  
 Se mirent cil qui bien entendent,  
 E il prodome (*les sages*) s'i amendent.

scholastic philosophy, too, must have been highly acceptable to those who had no access to the books in which such matters were more exclusively contained.

Among the larger satirical works of this period, none has obtained a more lasting reputation than the cycle of poems called *The Adventures of Reynard the Fox*\*—a much more extensive work than the popular story which a later age has received from the Germans. It consists of a series of rambling and unconnected episodes, each of which is a satire upon some class of individuals, or some point in the political system which was a subject of popular complaint. Traces of the story are met with as early as the twelfth century; and it is difficult to assign it a particular date. It would appear that the cunning and unscrupulous character of the fox had been from a very early period employed in fables of political satire; and this is perhaps a collection of such productions thrown into the form of a regular narrative. Some of the adventures of Reynard exhibit the general rapacity and injustice of the times—every man watching an opportunity to cheat his fellow; others satirize particular classes and orders of general society; others, again, describe the disorders of the ecclesiastics, and expose the hypocrisy of religious professors; while the confession and pilgrimage are bitter enough satires on the two great instruments of the clergy for abusing the credulous confidence of the laity, and turning it to their own advantage.

We come now to notice the *Fabliaux* of the trouvères; and without affecting a very exact or logical definition, we may characterize a fabliau as a jeu d'esprit, generally based on some well known proverb, anecdote, or adventure, strongly marked with satire, dramatic in its form, and moral in its tendency. Some of these compositions, indeed, are so eminently dramatic, that it is a wonder they did not give rise to

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\* See one version of this famous Apologue by S. Naylor, London, 1845.



regular comedy. But nearly all are so coarse in their details—the most spirited being the worst in this respect—that it is difficult to give a résumé of any without conveying a false impression.

As in our own day, some works are better known by the name of the publishers than of the authors, so these seem to have been recognised as the property of such a jongleur, rather than the invention of such a trouvère; many of them are of Eastern origin, and have been only slightly modified to suit the audience to be entertained by them. The jongleurs, like Shakspeare's fools, had license to say anything with impunity: no class either of men or of women escaped their satire; monarchs and nobles, bishops and priests, monks, philosophers, and dancers, even saints and devils, were castigated in turn; and while we cannot forgive their impiety, we must award them the palm for being the monopolists of truth. Certainly their satire does not generally present, as in the case of the troubadours, the interesting character of mental and literary freedom in individual opposition to feudal oppression; and yet it were gross injustice to consider the fabliers as mere retailers of scandal. Some of them, at least, had a higher mission. In an age when the crown and the commons were alike held in subjection by an insolent and powerful aristocracy, when the king was but the puppet, and the people the chattels of the barons, while both were the dupes of the clergy, the fabliers had the courage to combat the arrogance of the one and expose the vices of the other. They were the first, so far as appears, to give the sovereign the hint that he might deliver himself from his shackles by making common cause with the people.

One of the least exceptionable of these fabliaux is the battle between Carnage and Carême (flesh-days and fast-days), of which the ostensible object is to record how milk, cheese, and eggs came to be permitted on fast-days; while it embodies the political lesson we have referred to, by representing the de-



feated Carême as the favorite of the nobles, and the victorious Carnage as the darling of the *king* and *people*. Though abounding with puerilities and ill-assorted metaphors, this fabliau is so good a specimen of the literature of the thirteenth century, that we venture to introduce it more particularly by analysis and translation :—

At Whitsunday, I chanced to be  
At court, and heard the history  
Of war between two potentates,  
Which for your mirth my Muse relates.  
Equal in wealth and lands were they,  
And numerous vassals owned their sway.  
One of the twain was Carnage high,  
Esteemed a valiant, generous knight  
By king and people. T' other's name,  
Dear to the barons, was Carême ;  
A felon, as all those can tell,  
Who 'neath his sordid empire dwell.  
Poor folks he loathed, the rich adored,  
And gave them freely of his board.  
Many rich castles he possessed,  
Abbeys and convents, and the rest ;  
Whence he enormous tribute drew ;  
The sea was 'neath his empire too ;  
Seigneur he was of bays and strands,  
Of rivers, streams, and lakes, and ponds.  
I'll tell you how the battle rose  
T'wixt these exasperated foes ;  
The day they called their levies out ;  
The issue of the deadly rout.

As King Louis was holding his court at Paris, this Carême appeared with proud distinction, attended by Salmon, Plaice, and other knights of the ocean ; while Carnage, finding himself scorned and neglected, vowed vengeance against his rival. Whereupon Carême thus addressed him :—

"What mean thy threats, vile Carnage, say?  
 Wouldst thou with me provoke the fray?  
 Hence! in this palace, by the rood,  
 No right thou hast, but dost intrude.  
 Unsought thou com'st: I, I alone  
 Am welcomed with a benison;  
 Ladies and knights their homage bring,  
 Ladies and knights salute me king!"  
 "Thou liest! Nor thou, nor all thy race  
 Can rival me in right or place.  
 Hence from the palace with thy rabble!  
 We'll soon appease thy senseless gabble."

After some further squabbling, both heroes summon their  
 vassals and prepare for war. Sir Herring, the herald on one  
 side, commands the attendance of the fish from the whale  
 downward—

E'en to the minnows news he brings  
 Of war between the rival kings.

Carnage also assembles his armies:—

First came a host of potent soups,  
 Then chops and steaks in various groups;  
 Then pork well seasonod *à la vert*,  
 Came at the monarch's special prayer;  
 Roast joints regaled his royal eyes,  
 Pigeons and conies in huge pies;  
 Fat haunches with delight he views,  
 Collops of beef in savory stews;  
 Goslings with giblets he discovers,  
 Roast peacocks, curlews, widgeons, plovers,  
 Storks, wild-ducks, herons, bitterns, doves,  
 And the small tenants of the groves.  
 Cock-swans came last, a precious race,  
 Worthy a monarch's board to grace.  
 Then well-spiced sausages, that told  
 Of chitterlings, in cauls enrolled,

And mustard, keen provocative !  
 How could Carême behold and live ?

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Now Carnage, glancing on the rear,  
 Levies of milk discovers near,  
 From valleys bound right merrily,  
 With butter leagued in amity.  
 Hot tarts and custard in round dishes,  
 Came menacing the saucy fishes,  
 Squadrons of cream were seen to sally  
 With lance in rest, from hill and valley ;  
 Fresh cheeses from another part  
 Advanced, each brandishing a dart ;  
 Curds followed close ; but who can tell  
 What hosts of milk the legions swell !  
 Behold a chief of high degree,  
 A solid cheese, no coward he !  
 To succor Carnage at his need  
 He comes well mounted on a steed.

Vainly warned that he is about to wage an unequal and  
 disastrous war, Carême dons his armor.

Not steel the visor ; it was made  
 Of tench, without the smithy's aid ;  
 Of a fresh salmon his cuirass ;  
 His coat-of-mail a lamprey was ;  
 Two flat impenetrable skates  
 Composed his ample shoulder-plates ;  
 His casque, a pike to guard his head,  
 With roasted eels encompassèd ;  
 A long broad sole composed his blade ;  
 His spurs of pointed fishbones made ;  
 The grooms a huge gray mullet bring,  
 No common courier suits the king.

Carnage an ample stag bestrode,  
 In beef and mutton mailed he rode ;  
 No need had he to dread a blow  
 From mackerel or aquatic foe ;

Hauberk of partridges and quails,  
 And lesser game supplied the nails ;  
 The head of an enormous boar,  
 With polished tusks, for helm he wore ;  
 A peacock on the helmet beamed,  
 In sooth, the king of kings he seemed.  
 An eagle's beak his spurs supplied ;  
 He wore them with a knightly pride ;  
 Girt on his thigh a spit was seen,  
 Which erst a butcher had made clean ;  
 It had been sharpened by a cook ;  
 A large round tart for shield he took ;  
 Hot cheese-cakes, pasties, omelets, bound it ;  
 The whole with rim of paste surrounded.  
 But of the stag which he had mounted,  
 'Tis meet a little be recounted.  
 With larks, that fair Aurora greet,  
 With nightingales and linnets sweet  
 His horns were garnished high and low.  
 Sprightly he was, and nothing slow,  
 His feet were shod before, behind,  
 On every shoe were birds designed ;  
 The nails were pepper-corns ; the seat  
 Was of blanc-manger, soft and sweet,  
 To ladies dear, and men of taste ;  
 The pannels were of solid paste ;  
 His banner was a new-made cheese,  
 Or milk just curdled, if you please.  
 "Let's on!" he cried ; and on they go,  
 Steed facing steed, and foe to foe.

\* \* \*

Just as the furious champions closed,  
 A troop of capons interposed,  
 Thirsting for blood. Not less elate,  
 Whitings and haddocks, urged by fate,  
 The battle waged. Astounding sight,  
 When fish and fowl for honor fight !

\* \* \*

Mackerel and flounders, nothing quailed,  
Huge sirloins of roast-beef assailed;  
And eggs, a formidable levy,  
Quickly dispersed the herring bevy.  
Just then a salmon, fresh and strong,  
Spurring his steed the ranks among,  
Fiercely attacked a roasted chief,  
The noblest of the race of beef,  
And mauled him so, that consternation  
Had spread a panic o'er the nation,  
Had not undaunted Carnage seen,  
And rushed the combatants between;  
Spurring his stag, he dealt a blow  
So vigorous on the exulting foe,  
It soon composed the salmon's mettle;  
Down popped the champion in a kettle  
That hissed beneath unhappy fish—  
There lacked but pepper for a dish.

O then 'twas wondrous to behold  
Beans, peas, and lentils rushing bold  
T' avenge their comrade in the caldron.  
Yes, beans and peas advanced in squadron.  
Cold, hot, green, dry, all, all ahoop  
In porridge some, and some in soup.  
Pepper had raised their courage high;  
The king had rued his victory,  
But that a host of sausages  
Arrived and checked their ravages.  
Both beans and peas had routed been,  
But new assailants intervene;  
Eels just emerging from the mud  
Compel the sausages to scud;  
Carnage remains in jeopardy.  
Skate, haddocks, monsters of the sea,  
Dabs, oysters, congers, pilchards, bream,  
Flukes, sauced with fennel, join Carême.  
Sudden a knight, his surname Jack,  
Well mounted on a mullet's back,



Assails a pasty ; stuffing, crust,  
And gravy welter in the dust.  
Fierce raged the battle far and wide,  
And fish and fowl promiscuous died ;  
'Twas terrible to either host,  
But thine, Carême, had suffered most.  
Carnage, of his achievements proud,  
Sounded a horn so dire and loud,  
That hill and dale re-echoed round ;  
His vassals heard and knew the sound.  
'Twas night ; each army went to quarters,  
Tired with fatigue and mutual slaughters.

The morning brings reinforcements to Carnage, the followers of Carême clamor for peace, and—

A herring bears Carême's submission,  
Without reserve, without condition.

While Carnage is considering the terms, Christmas comes forward, and insists on dictating them—

“Carême must quit the kingdom straight ;  
Nor longer tarry in the state  
Than six weeks, and three days beside ;  
In other country he must bide.  
On these conditions we agree  
To cease our just hostility.”  
“Sir Christmas, be not so severe,  
Exclaimed the king : “no danger fear ;  
Let him and all the host at will  
Establish here their domicile ;  
Let others, if their taste it suits,  
Do penance on salt fish and roots.”  
The knotty point thus Carnage carried ;  
And all who in his empire tarried,  
Eggs, milk, and cheese might eat on Fridays,  
As freely as on feasts and high days.

Thus was Carême declared to be  
Liegeman to Carnage' seigneurie.

Satan and satanic agents were often introduced into the fabliaux. They were always made subjects of burlesque, and held up to ridicule in the same manner as were the priests, barons, and other hated tyrants, against whom the trouvère minstrelsy was directed. It was the merit of the Italian poets first to invest Satan with a lofty spirit, and render him an object of respectful terror instead of ridicule and disgust; while to Milton it was reserved to complete the splendors of satanic majesty.

The poetry of the trouvères is a mine of gold, though so largely mixed with alloy that it is difficult to extract the pure metal. Its romances, apologues, lays, fabliaux, and chronicles contributed to every species of subsequent literature, unless tragedy be excepted. They contained the germs of most of those rich productions of genius, which gradually matured and attained their highest perfection in the age of Louis XIV. Nor in France alone. It was to the troubadours and trouvères that Italy owed a large part of the materials which Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio clothed with new forms; while England, somewhat later, gathered largely from both.

Lyric poetry, in the style of the troubadours, received some cultivation at this time, but chiefly among the sovereign princes and more powerful barons. THIBAUD III.,\* Count of Champagne, and afterwards King of Navarre, was the most eminent of these; but whatever his merits, the style did not fall in with the prevailing taste; and his love ditties excited no such admiration as the lays of Marie his contemporary. Posterity would perhaps never have heard of them, but for the author's supposed attachment to Blanche of Castile, the mother of St.

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\* Born 1201. Died 1258. An account of his attachment to Blanche of Castile may be found in Mrs. Bush's *Lives of the Queens of France*, vol. i. pp. 152-4.

Louis, and the influence which this exercised upon the affairs of the kingdom.\*

“After the troubadours of Provence and the trouvères of Northern France, our poetry by small degrees,” says Pasquier, “lost its credit, and was neglected for a considerable time.”

The thirteenth century saw the completion of the three great mythologies of the middle age, which may be designated the religious, the chivalrous, and the allegorical. These were not, as we have already said, the invention of single individuals, but a collective imagination like that which created the beautiful fables of antiquity.

Religion, no less than feudality, had its chivalry, for ignorance had rendered the worship of saints a species of paganism, full of fabulous stories, such as the *Golden Legend of Pierre de Voragine*; and on the other hand, they had counterparts of the profane fabliaux in comic tales of an edifying character, in which the outwitting of the devil formed the burlesque of the Christian marvellous.

Chivalrous mythology, when complete, had borrowed fairy-land from the North, and sorcery from the East; it had laid Scandinavian traditions, Arab fables, and Christian legends,

\* Here is one of his songs :—

Une chanson encor voil  
Faire, pour moi conforter,  
Pour celi dont je me doil  
Voeil mon chant renoverer ;  
Por ce ai talant de chanter :  
Car quant je ne chant, mi oil  
Tornent sovent en plorer.  
Simple et france sans orgoil  
Quidai ma dame trover :  
Molt me fut de bel acoil,  
Mès ce fut pour moi grever ;  
Si sont à li mi penser,  
Ke la nuit, quant je somoil,  
Va mes cuer merci crier.

under contribution, to form its company of genii, enchanters, fairies, giants, dwarfs, and griffins, to help or hinder the fantastic enterprises of adventurous knights.

The personification of virtues, vices, and abstract ideas, formed the allegorical, which, as we have seen, appeared first with the *Romance of the Rose*, and was perpetuated through a long series of similar works. This is the class of mythological personages that caught the fancy of our earliest English poets. It mingles in the tales of Chaucer, who treated chivalrous poetry with contempt, and almost entirely fills the tedious poem of Spenser's *Faery Queene*.

Lyric poetry, as we have seen, had not been sufficient to perpetuate the Provençal, but north of the Loire the epic furnished a broad and solid base for a national language, as had been the case in ancient Greece and Italy. Nor only so; the inexhaustible repertory of trouvère poetry has supplied to an almost unknown extent the bards of other countries throughout Europe. The sublime imaginings of Dante were evidently suggested by their allegories. The tales of Boccaccio are little more than a repetition of their fabliaux; Ariosto's materials were their romances of chivalry; the Portuguese Amadis da Gaula probably originated in the same school; and as for our own country, to say nothing of Chaucer and Spenser, our minor poets have been more indebted in this direction than they have had the candor to acknowledge. Parnell, for instance, does not tell, but it has been discovered, that his celebrated poem of *The Hermit* is almost a literal translation of one from the trouvères, entitled *The Hermit and the Angel*.\*

Nor only did France in the middle age give birth to a cycle of literature, which from the thirteenth century was used as a

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\* Milton says, "I will tell you whither my younger feet wandered; I betook me among those lofty fables and romances, which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood."



model by other nations ; it also became a scientific rendezvous. The University of Paris was a fortress raised in the twelfth century by intellect against ecclesiastical dogmatism ; and hither resorted from all parts of Europe men greedy of knowledge, and aspiring after intellectual independence. Here Brunetto, Latini, and Dante improved themselves. Here Roger Bacon passed many years in deep seclusion and study—the reason of the preference, perhaps, being found chiefly in the good order and equal administration of justice which the metropolis of France enjoyed under Louis IX., while the other capitals of Europe were subject to confusion and violence. Here the scholastic system of dialectics was cultivated, and through its influence the literature took such a turn as ever after to incline more to eloquence than poetry. From this stronghold, too, there issued, contemporaneously with the fabliaux, a host of satires in Latin verse, directed against the usurpations of the ecclesiastical body, and so much to its annoyance as to render it little matter of wonder that churchmen found no rest till they obtained a footing in this establishment themselves, and kept its wit and learning under their own influence.\*

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### III.—DRAMATIC POETRY.

DESTRUCTION OF THE ANCIENT THEATRE—THEATRICAL EXHIBITIONS IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES—THE MYSTERIES—THAT OF THE PASSION—THE MORALITIES.

It is among this people, and during this period, that we are to trace the first rude efforts for the revival of the most difficult of the arts ; that which had been carried to such perfection in ancient Greece, and which was destined to appear with renewed splendor in modern Europe.

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\* For fuller details upon the subject of this chapter, see Dunlop's History of Fiction.



The ancient theatre had received its death-blow from Christianity. It had, indeed, too well deserved the anathemas which were hurled at it by the early Christian preachers, having become so indecorous as even to be reckoned by Julian, the apostate, unfit for the attendance of his pagan priests. The histrionic profession, which had been so honored in Greece, had been placed under the ban of both church and state, and its ruin was completed by the invasion of the northern barbarians, some feeble remains only lingering at Constantinople.

But it would seem to be the natural tendency of the human mind to demand the excitement inspired by spectacles of this nature, especially at a certain stage of its progress towards maturity; and so it happened that a new theatre arose in the very midst of the church which had annihilated the ancient one. The ceremonies of religion became themselves dramatic exhibitions, and that of the most profane and licentious character. It was not enough to commemorate the solemn recollections of Christianity by reading, and prayer, and meditation; they were acted, made plays of, in short; and to relieve the tragic feeling and solemn impression which such exhibitions were calculated to awaken, a mixture of the comic was introduced.

“Theophylactes, of Constantinople, was the author of the still continued practice of offending God in the memory of the saints on holy days, by indecent jokes, laughing and shouting in the midst of holy hymns, which we ought to offer to God with contrition of heart for our salvation. He had collected a company of disreputable characters, and had placed at their head one Euthymes, whom he also appointed over the choir. And he instructed them to mingle with the divine service satanic dances, vulgar cries, and songs taken from the streets and the lowest haunts of vice.” So we have it in Cedrene, a Byzantine author of the eleventh century, that a bishop attached a theatrical company to his church. Little did the

authors of such exhibitions dream that they were groping the way to the drama, and that they were seeking it by the same path as were the Greeks of old, when they celebrated the mysteries of Eleusis.

It is to be noted, at the same time, that the mediæval Latin which served as a link between the ancient classics and the literature of modern nations, had furnished some essays to prepare for the revival of the drama in the language of the people. Hroswithe, for instance, a German nun of the eleventh century, having read Terence, conceived the idea of writing little dramas in the same language on religious themes. She produced six, which were acted by the young sisters of the convent, and probably often repeated. Of course such efforts in a dead language, in the seclusion of a cloister, and on subjects remote from modern interest, could exercise but little influence on the world without.

The popular theatricals of the middle age are traced to the religious pilgrims of the twelfth or thirteenth century, who, on their return from the Holy Land—possibly borrowing a hint from the spectacles to which we have alluded as existing in Constantinople—attempted to convey an idea of the scenes they had witnessed in Palestine, by acting them over at home, with the aid of some rude paintings. It is certain that, about the end of the fourteenth century, a company of pilgrims represented such a spectacle at the nuptials of Charles VI. and Isabella of Bavaria; and that they soon afterwards formed an establishment in Paris for the regular performance of dramatic entertainments. They acted over the whole public life of the Saviour from his baptism to his death, but their *chef-d'œuvre* was that of his last sufferings, and hence they were denominated the *Fraternity of the Passion*.

Familiar as we all are by name with the Mysteries and Moralities\* of the middle age, it may not be amiss here to

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\* A Miracle Play is introduced into Longfellow's Golden Legend. In the notes appended to that work may be found descriptions of recent representations of Miracle Plays.

notice more particularly this earliest specimen of them. It introduces eighty-seven characters, among whom are the three persons of the Trinity, six angelic beings, six devils, the twelve apostles, Herod and his court, Pilate and his soldiers, besides a number more, the offspring of the poet's fancy. Some of these characters are well drawn, and the scenes occasionally display no small degree of tragic power. Extravagant machinery appears to have been employed, and many parts to have been sung in recitative to music. The following is part of the scene in which John the Baptist is interrogated by the messengers of the Pharisees :—

*Abyas.* Though fallen be man's sinful line,  
Holy prophet ! it is writ,  
Christ shall come to ransom it,  
And by doctrine, and by sign,  
Bring them to his grace divine.  
Wherefore, seeing now the force  
Of thy high deeds, thy grave discourse,  
And virtues shown of great esteem,  
That thou art he we surely deem.

*St. John.* I am not Messiah !—No !  
At the feet of Christ I bow.

*Elyachim.* Why, then, wildly wanderest thou  
Naked in this wilderness ?  
Say ! what faith dost thou profess ?  
And to whom thy service paid ?

*Bannanyas.* Thou assemblest, it is said,  
In these lonely woods a crowd  
To hear thy voice proclaiming loud,  
Like that of our most holy men.  
Art thou a king in Israel, then ?  
Know'st thou the laws and prophecies ?  
Who art thou ? say !

*Nathan.* Thou dost advise  
Messiah is come down below.  
Hast seen him ? say, how dost thou know ?  
Or art thou he ?

*St. John.* I answer : No !

*Nachor.* Who art thou? Art Elias, then?  
Perhaps Elias?

*St. John.* No!

*Bannanyas.* Again!

Who art thou? what thy name? Express!  
For never surely shall we guess.  
Thou art the Prophet?

*St. John.* I am not.

*Elyachim.* Who and what art thou? Tell us what!  
That a true answer we may bear  
Unto our lords, who sent us here  
To learn thy name and mission.

*St. John. Ego*

*Vox clamantis in deserto.*

A voice, a solitary cry  
In the desert paths am I!  
Smooth the paths, and make them meet  
For the great Redeemer's feet—  
Him, who, brought by our misdoing,  
Comes for this foul world's renewing.

The result is the conversion and baptism of the messengers. In the baptism of the Saviour, the stage-directions are remarkable, and afford a graphic view of these Gothic entertainments:—

“Here Jesus enters the waters of Jordan all naked, and St. John takes some of the water in his hand, and throws it on the head of Jesus:—

*St. John.* Sir, you now baptized are,  
As it suits my simple skill,  
Not the lofty rank you fill;  
Unmeet for such great service I;  
Yet my God, so debonair,  
All that's wanting will supply.

“Here Jesus comes out of the river Jordan, and throws himself on his knees, all naked, before Paradise. Then God the Father speaks, and the Holy Ghost descends in the form



of a white dove upon the head of Jesus, and then returns into Paradise; and note, that the words of God the Father be very audibly pronounced, and well sounded, in three voices—that is to say, a treble, a counter-treble, and a counter-bass, all in tune; and in this way must the following lines be repeated:—

*Hic est filius meus delectus,  
In quo mihi bene complacui.  
C'estui-ci est mon fils amé Jésus,  
Que bien me plaist, ma plaisance est en lui."*

Good taste had not then suggested that tragedy and comedy should appear in separate dramas; it was enough to produce them in different scenes. In this composition, the comic parts are filled by the devils, whose eagerness to give one another a wipe (se torchonner) occasioned great mirth in the assembly. Here is part of their dialogue:—

*Berith.* Who he is, I cannot tell—  
This Jesus; but I know full well,  
That in all the worlds that be,  
There is not such a one as he.  
Who is it that gave him birth  
I know not, nor from whence on earth  
He came, or what great devil taught him,  
But in no evil have I caught him;  
Nor know I any vice he hath.

*Satan.* Haro! but you make me wroth,  
When such dismal news I hear.

*Berith.* Wherefore so?

*Satan.* Because I fear  
He will make my kingdom less.  
Leave him in the wilderness,  
And let us return to hell,  
To Lucifer our tale to tell,  
And to ask his sound advice.

*Berith.* The imps are ready in a trice;  
Better escort cannot be.



*Lucifer.* Is it Satan that I see,  
And Berith, coming in a passion?

*Ashtaroth.* Master! let me lay the lash on;  
Here's the thing to do the deed.

*Lucifer.* Please to moderate your speed,  
To lash behind and lash before ye,  
Ere you hear them tell their story,  
Whether shame they bring or glory.

They relate the failure of their efforts to tempt the Holy One; whereupon Ashtaroth falls upon them with his imps, and scourges them back to earth.

This work is of immense extent, filling a large folio volume, printed in close double columns. It was not—could not be—represented all at once, but was divided into sections, called *journées* or “days,” a name which was retained in the Spanish drama, though its origin was forgotten.

*The Mystery of the Passion* was soon followed by that of *The Conception*, *The Nativity*, and *The Resurrection*; afterwards, the legends of the saints, as well as the whole of the Old Testament history, were dramatized and brought on the stage; and when the subject in hand was anyway deficient in authentic details, it only gave larger scope for the exercise of the poet's invention.

The stage on which these pieces were represented consisted of three scaffolds rising above each other. The centre or terrestrial one represented Jerusalem, or the native country of whatever saint or patriarch was in question. The stages above and below were for heaven and hell, where the proceedings of Deity and Satan were respectively displayed, and whence angels descended and devils ascended, as their interference in mundane affairs demanded.

At length the Clercs de la Bezoche (clerks of the revels), a society of laymen incorporated for the regulation of public festivities, determined themselves to get up dramas for the

public amusement; and as the Fraternity of the Passion enjoyed by royal charter a monopoly of the Mysteries, they invented the *Moralities*. These differed little substantially from the former, some of them being the parables dramatized; others, purely allegorical compositions, in which the virtues and vices were *dramatis personæ*. But the company gradually widening their sphere, ceased to restrict themselves to matters of edification, and, before the end of the fifteenth century, had produced veritable farces on subjects of modern interest. One of the most successful of these was that of the *Avocat Pathelin*, which appeared first in 1480, and has been remodelled and introduced again in the present age. It is to this work that we trace the expression, *Revenons à nos moutons*, which has become a proverb.

No French Shakspeare arose to consecrate, ennoble, and perpetuate this truly national species of drama; and on the revival of classic tastes, the *Mysteries* and *Moralities* were put under interdict by Francis I., after a career of two centuries. Some of the best French critics of our own day consider it to have been seriously detrimental to the dramatic art, that the national genius was thus stifled under the influence of a more learned literature. So says one of them: "The *Mysteries* were barbarous entertainments, no doubt, the infancy of the dramatic art, in which music, dancing, allegory, comedy, and tragedy were mingled and confounded; but still they were scenes full of life and activity, from which we might have elicited a literature much more original and more fertile, if our genius had not become Latin and Greek under Louis XIV."

## IV.—POETRY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

STATE OF THE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE—CHRISTINE DE PISAN—ALAIN  
CHARTIER—CHARLES D'ORLEANS—VILLON.

FRENCH had been as yet merely a popular language; the vehicle of a literature which did but play on the surface of society; unequal to lofty themes, and destitute of the fixity requisite for serious composition. It varied from province to province, and from author to author, because no masterpiece had inaugurated any one of its numerous dialects. It was consequently disdained by the more serious writers, who of necessity continued to employ the learned Latin.

In the fifteenth century, literature assumed a somewhat wider range, and the language began to take precision and force. It was an age of much general improvement in intelligence and taste for intellectual pursuits: there was a good deal of literary industry, and even some talent, but still there was nothing great or original: no one commanding genius; nothing to mark an epoch in the history of letters.

CHRISTINE DE PISAN, a woman “of rare intellect and exquisite beauty,” left some verses, which entitle her to an honorable place among the poets of this age. She was born in 1367. The time of her death is unknown. She wrote several prose works. The following touching lines are from her pen:—

## ON THE DEATH OF HER FATHER.

A mourning dove, whose mate is dead,  
A lamb, whose shepherd is no more,  
Even such am I, since he is fled,  
Whose loss I cease not to deplore:  
Alas! since to the grave they bore  
My sire, for whom these tears are shed,  
What is there left for me to love,—  
A mourning dove?

O, that his grave for me had room,  
Where I at length might calmly rest!  
For all to me is saddest gloom,  
All scenes to me appear unblest;  
And all my hope is in his tomb,  
To lay my head on his cold breast,  
Who left his child nought else to love!  
A mourning dove!

ALAIN CHARTIER, who was born at Bayeux in 1386, and who died, as some say, in 1438, but according to others in 1447, was renowned as a writer. He was secretary of Charles VI. and of Charles VII. The language was greatly indebted to him. His admirers have given him the title of the Father of French Eloquence. One of the best of his poems, "*La Belle Dame sans Mercy*," is especially interesting to us, because we have an old English translation of it, attributed to Chaucer.\*

CHARLES DUKE OF ORLEANS was the son of an Italian princess, which may account for the fact that while he adopted the allegorical style which had been the rage in France since the *Romance of the Rose*, he borrowed many of his ideas and expressions from Petrarch. Charles was made a prisoner at the battle of Agincourt, in 1415, and taken to England, where he was detained for twenty-five years. It is to this captivity that we owe the volume now referred to; yet, strange to say, it contains no expression of the poet's own veritable feelings. That series of misfortunes of which his history is made up—the assassination of his father, the death of his amiable mother in consequence, his own captivity, his double widowhood, from the death of two wives within nine years—not one of these themes drew from him a single couplet. No event, whether

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\* An extract from this translation may be found in Longfellow's *Poets and Poetry of Europe*, p. 439.



public or personal, led him to the depths of his own heart for the poetry which might have embalmed it. He seems to have written to divert himself from his own thoughts, not to embody them. Accordingly, we have here the whole cycle of Love's mythology; Amour and Venus are the sovereigns of a mighty empire; Beauté, their prime-minister; Bonne-Foi, their secretary; Loyauté, the keeper of the seals. Bel-Acueil and Plaisance are the guardians of their palace; Bonne-Nouvelle and Loyal-Rapport are their messengers; les Plaisirs-Mondains, their courtiers. Their subjects are various in name and character; the localities of the empire are such as l'Hermitage de Pensées, le Bois de Melancholie, la Forêt de Tristesse. Then there are humors now sad, now gay, imitated from the sonnets of Petrarch, and added to these already stereotyped characters. Charles d'Orleans was the last who imitated the *Romance of the Rose*, and the first who drew upon the Italian models.\*

The verses of VILLON, a low ruffian of Paris,† were inspired by the events of his not very creditable life, and the difficul-

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\* The following verses on Spring are considered among the most graceful of Charles's minor pieces:—

Le temps a laissé son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,  
Il s'est vestu de broderie,  
De soleil luisant, clair et beau.  
Il n'y a beste, ni oiseau  
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie:  
Le temps a laissé son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.  
Rivière, fontaine, et ruisseau  
Portent en livrée jolie  
Gouttes d'argent d'orfavrerie;  
Chacun s'habille de nouveau:  
Le temps a laissé son manteau  
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.

† Born 1431. Died about 1500.



ties and dangers to which his vices exposed him. / His language is not that of the court, but of the people; and his *Repues Franches* are the grotesque Iliad of his lawless career. Again and again he suffered imprisonment for petty larcenies, and at the age of twenty-five was condemned to be hanged with five of his companions. On the evening before his anticipated fate, he composed a ballad,\* in which he laughs at the disgraceful exposure—his body washed by the rain, dried in the sun, driven hither and thither by the winds; and yet there is melancholy in the gaiety; a tear is on the poet's eyelid, though the broad grin is about the mouth. The honor of Villon's poetry is that of marking the first sensible progress after the *Romance of the Rose*. If any credit were due in this respect to the royal poet who preceded him, it is to be remembered that Charles had little or no influence over the literature of his day; the echo of those notes with which his prison resounded were not caught by the public ear till the eighteenth century; the volume to which we have referred remained unknown till it was discovered, in manuscript, in the British Museum, and published by the Abbé Sallier in 1734.

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\* La pluye nous a débuez et lavez,  
 Et le soleil desséchez et noirciz,  
 Pies, corbeaux, nous ont les yeux cavez,  
 Et arraché la barbe et les sourceilz,  
 Jamais nul temps nous ne sommes rassiz,  
 Puis çà, puis là, comme le vent varie,  
 A son plaisir sans cesse nous charie,  
 Plus becquetez d'oyseaulx que dez à coudre :  
 Hommes, ici n'usez de mocquerie,  
 Mais priez Dieu que tous nous veuille absouldre.

## V.—EARLY FRENCH PROSE.

CHRONICLERS OF PERSONAL ADVENTURES—VILLE-HARDOUIN—JOINVILLE—  
THE PROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN FROISSART—ROMANCE OF MERLIN IN  
PROSE—COMINES, A PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORIAN.

It has been well said, that "literature begins with poetry, but it is established by prose, which fixes the language."

The work usually referred to as the earliest effort in French prose is the *Chronicle of VILLE-HARDOUIN*,\* a production of the thirteenth century, interesting, indeed, in a philological point of view, but still more so as affording a lively picture of the middle age in one of its most singular enterprises. It is a personal narrative of chivalrous adventure, and relates with graphic particularity the conquest of Constantinople by the knights of Christendom.

At a splendid tourney which was held at Champagne, a number of knights resolved to embrace the Crusade. They made all the preparations in their power; but furnished though they were with horses, lances, and swords, they were obliged to apply to a city of merchants for vessels to transport them to the Holy Land. Six of their number, among whom was Ville-Hardouin himself, were sent for this purpose as deputies to Venice. The historian describes their introduction to the palace of the doge; to the council; and, finally, to a full assembly of the people in the Church of St. Mark; for as Venice was now a democracy, these haughty barons of France "must humbly supplicate the people." It was Ville-Hardouin himself who made the speech.† "My lords, the highest and

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\* Born 1167. Died 1213.

† Jeffroy de Ville-Hardoin li mareschaust de Champaigne monstra la parole pour l'accort, et par la volenté as autres messages, et lor dist: Seigneur, li baron de France li plus halt et plus poestez, nos ont à vos envoieiz,

most powerful barons of France have sent us to you, and implore you to take pity on Jerusalem, which is in the power of the Turks, and that you will, in the name of God, accompany them to avenge the dishonor of Jesus Christ; and they have chosen you, because they know no nation is so powerful on the sea, and they have commanded us to fall at your feet, and not to rise till you have granted the promise of taking pity upon the Holy Land beyond the sea." The deputies continued weeping on their knees, till the whole assembly lifted their hands and cried: "We agree! we agree!" The historian next describes the slow preparations for the voyage, the death of the Count of Champagne, who was to have taken the command, and the appointment of the Marquis of Montferrat in his stead. The intended pilgrims having collected at Venice, the aged doge, blind, and bending under the weight of fourscore years, assembles the people again in the Church of St. Mark, and announces his own determination to join the enterprise. At length the adventurers set sail for Corfu. The difficulties of the voyage, the jealousies and dissensions of the chiefs, are depicted with great simplicity, the historian seldom referring to his own deeds, and then with singular modesty. "Thus witness I, Geoffrey," he says, "Marshal of Champagne, who indited this work." Now we have an account of their arrival at Constantinople, and a picture of this Greek people, this petrified fragment of the Eastern Empire, brought

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si vos erient mercy que il vos preigne pitié de Hierusalem, qui est en servage de Turs, que vos por Dieu voilliez lor compaignier à la honte Jesu-Christ vengier, et por ce vos i ont eslis que il sévent que nules gens n'ont si grand pooir qui sor mer soient, comme vos, à la vostre genz, et nos commandèrent que nos vos enchaissions as piez et que nos n'en leveissions dès que vos oriez oetroyé que vos ariez pitié de la Terre Sainte d'outremer. Maintenant li six messages s'agenoillent à lor piez mult plorant: li Dux et tuit liautre s'escrierent tuit à une voiz, et tendent lor mains en halt, et distrent: Nos l'otrions, nos l'otrions. Enki ot si grant bruit et si grant noise que il sembla que terre fondist.

into collision with the young race of French warriors; the cunning and timidity of the Byzantine Court, teeming with plots; and the rude and ardent ambition of the Crusaders. Then we have their change of purpose, and the events which led them to take possession of Constantinople for themselves, and establish French seignories in Greece, with the mode in which they justify themselves for having diverted an army destined to subdue the infidels, and employed it in the conquest of a Christian state. The chronicle ends with the events of the year 1207; and it is from the Byzantine historians that we learn how ephemeral was the influence of these conquerors, and how few traces they left on the language, religion, or manners of the Greeks. The chivalrous romances of France, however, were received by these people for veritable histories; and fifty years afterwards, when all traces of the conquerors had disappeared, several noble families of Constantinople boasted their descent from the paladins Roland and Rinaldo.

This ancient chronicle traces out for us some of the realities of that chivalry of which the mediæval romances were the ideal; and thus furnishes, in some sort, a guide whereby we may at least in part judge how far to understand those romances as embodying substantial truth.

A great improvement in point of simplicity and perspicuity of style is apparent in JOINVILLE,\* the amiable and light-hearted ecclesiastic who wrote *La Vie de St. Louis*, whom he had accompanied to the Holy Land, and whose pious adventures he affectionately records. He has much more freedom and animation than Ville-Hardouin, mingling his narration of facts with records of his own feelings and opinions, and with descriptions of the persons and places that he saw.†

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\* Born 1223. Died 1317.

† Thus, for instance, he describes the Nile:—*Ce flum (fleuve) est divers*



During the fourteenth century, France was involved in anarchy through misgovernment, civil war, and foreign invasion: nevertheless, it was not without symptoms of social progress. In 1355, John II. being threatened with a new war against England, convoked the three estates of the realm—that is to say, the deputies of the nobles, the clergy, and the towns—when each, we are told, answered his appeal through a single speaker, and it was determined that the concurrence of the three orders should be necessary for carrying any political measure. The subsequent debates of this stormy period, if they have been faithfully transmitted, show what rapid advances had been made by the commons during the two centuries to place them now on a level with those who had formerly enjoyed the monopoly of both politics and science.

The third estate does not appear, however, to have made the same advance in the literary that they had in the political arena. The clergy continued to compose theological disquisitions, the nobles to make chivalrous poems and descriptions of tourneys and battle-fields, while the people wrote nothing but satires on the vices of the one class and the insolence of the other.

But the public events, which were somewhat inimical to the

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de toutes autres rivières ; car quant viennent les autres rivières aval, et plus y chieent (tombent) de petites rivières et de petitz ruissiaus, et en ce flum n'en chiet nulles : ainçois avient ainsi que il vient tout en un chanel jusques en Egypte, et lors gete (jette) de li ses branches qui s'espandent parmi Egypte. Et quant ce vient après la saint Rémy, les sept rivières s'espandent par le país, et cuevrent les terres pleines ; et quant elles se retroient, les gaugneurs (laboureurs) vont chascun labourer en sa terre à une charrue sans rouelles (roues) ; de quoy ils treuvent dedans la terre les fourmens, les orges, les comminz, le riz, et vivent si bien que nulz n'i sauroit qu'amender (rien faire plus) ; ne se scet l'en dont celle treuve (trouvaille) vient mez que de la volonté Dieu. . . . L'yaue (l'eau) du flum est de tel nature, que, quant nous la pendions en poz de terre blans que l'on fait au país, aus cordes de nos paveillons, l'yaue devenoit ou (au) chaut du jour aussi froide comme de fonteinne. . . .



poetic Muse, gave inspiration to the historic; and about the same time that Villani appeared in Italy, and that Ayala introduced some degree of simple eloquence into the chronicles of Spain, Froissart arose in France to impart vivacity of coloring to historical narration.

FROISSART\* was an ecclesiastic of the day—in plain terms, a jolly churchman—who certainly had at one time a cure of souls, but exhibited little either in his life or writings to bespeak the sacred profession. We must take the age as we find it. It was nothing strange in those days for a tonsured ecclesiastic to write a volume of erotic poetry, and to be found a constant guest at the festive-hall and nuptial-banquet. Froissart took holy orders in early life, but having little taste for the duties of his vocation, he presented himself to Robert de Namur, Lord of Montfort, who, perceiving in him a natural curiosity, the bent of which was to inquire concerning military achievements, engaged him to compose a chronicle of the wars of the time. Froissart forthwith assumed the title of a historian, and used it as his introduction wherever he desired to inquire into matters which he wished to record. It is not easy for us to appreciate the difficulty of being a historian in that age. What could he relate? There were no books to tell him of the past, no regular communication between nations to inform him of the present, for all was profound secrecy in the councils of princes. There was no help for him but to follow the fashion of knights-errant, and set out on horseback—not, indeed, to seek chivalrous adventures like the hidalgo de la Mancha, but as an itinerant historian, to hunt up talkative ancient chevaliers, écuyers, et héraults d'armes, to furnish materials for his chronicle. He must wander from town to town, and from castle to castle, to see the places of which he

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\* Born 1333. Died 1401.

would write, and learn the events on the spot. Such a roving commission exactly suited the temper of Froissart; and perhaps it would be hard to say whether he travelled in order to write, more certainly than he first undertook to write as an excuse for travelling.

His first journey was to England, where he was cordially received and employed as clerk by Queen Philippa of Hainault. He accompanied the Duke of Clarence when he went to Milan for his bride, and here there met three of the choicest spirits of the age—Boccaccio and Chaucer with Froissart. After the death of Philippa, our historian passed successively into the service of several of the princes of Europe, for whom he acted as secretary and poet, always keeping his eyes and ears open to glean matters for historic record. A long life was spent thus in quest of facts; sometimes he met as by good chance some one who volunteered to supply him with details from personal knowledge; sometimes he had long journeys here and there in search of eye witnesses of the events he desired to record. It is not well known where or how he wrote; but that he compiled his chronicle in the midst of this restless kind of life, doubtless often altering, enlarging, or abridging, in England what he had written in France, and in France what he had done in England.

The book thus composed is an almost universal history of the different states of Europe, from 1322 till the end of the fourteenth century. We say almost universal, for England and France are certainly predominant—the conquests of the one, the alternate misfortunes and successes of the other. But the author winds other stories about the main thread of his narrative, and always, like Herodotus, tells how, where, and from whom he received his information. His great events, battles, and fêtes, he reserves to himself, and describes as though he had seen them; but in minor details he introduces his informant, and repeats the dialogue that took place. He

troubles himself with no explanations or theories of cause and effect, nor yet with dry statistics of ways and means, or with the philosophy of state-policy—he is simply a story-teller, and a graphic one. On the whole, he is considered impartial, though he has obviously a leaning towards England. We may think he seems less shocked than he ought to be at some of the outrages he relates; but he would have been untrue to the spirit of the times had he made more of them.

Sir Walter Scott called Froissart his master; and there is more than one English translation of his chronicle.

It is to him that we owe the well-known details of the siege of Calais by Edward III.; the heroism of Eustace St. Pierre,\* and his companions, who devoted themselves as victims to the king's displeasure that the other citizens might be spared;

\* The following may prove as a specimen of the language at this period. . . . Lors messire Jean de Vienne vint au marché, et fit sonner la cloche pour assembler toutes manières de gens à la halle. Au son de la cloche, vinrent hommes et femmes; car moult désiraient à ouïr nouvelles. Quand ils furent tous venus et assemblés en la halle, hommes et femmes, messire Jean de Vienne leur démontra moult doucement les paroles toutes telles que ci-devant sont récitées, et leur dit que autrement ne pouvait être, et eussent sur ce avis et brève réponse. Quand ils ouïrent ce rapport, ils commencèrent tous à crier et pleurer, et n'eurent pour l'heure pouvoir de répondre ni de parler, et mêmelement messire Jean de Vienne larmoyait moult tendrement.

Une espace après se leva en pied le plus riche bourgeois de la ville, que on appelait sire Eustache de Saint-Pierre, et dit devant tous ainsi: "Seigneurs, grand'pitié et grand méchef serait de laisser mourir un tel peuple, que ici a, par famine ou autrement, quand on y peut trouver aucun moyen. . . . J'ai si grand'espérance d'avoir grâce et pardon envers notre Seigneur, si je meurs pour ce peuple sauver, que je veuil être le premier; et me mettrait volontiers en ma chemise, à nud chef, et la hart au col, en la merci du roi d'Angleterre." Quand sire Eustache de Saint-Pierre eut dit cette parole, chacun l'alla adorer de pitié; et plusieurs hommes et femmes se jetaient à ses pieds, pleurants tendrement; et était grand'pitié de là être, et eux ouïr, écouter et regarder.

and the intercession of Queen Philippa, by which they were saved.\*

PHILIP DE COMINES† was a man of his age, but in advance of it, combining the simplicity of the fifteenth century with the sagacity of a later period; an annalist, like Froissart, but not a mere describer of battles and tourneys; he was a statesman, unfolding the secrets of government, and the arts of negotiation; a political philosopher, embracing, like Machiavelli and Montesquieu, the remoter consequences which flowed from the events he narrated and the principles he unfolded.

Comines learned the profession of a historian in making his own fortune as a politician. He was born a subject of the Duke of Burgundy, but perceiving it would not be advantageous to be the minister of so rash a prince, he secretly aided his enemy, Louis XI., and afterwards found it easy to transfer himself to his service. He conducted negotiations for him with England, Florence, Venice, Savoy; and if it was necessary to buy a minister in the course of such treaties, he undertook it cheerfully, and performed it prudently. It is to be regretted that the first French historian who was capable of treating his subject philosophically was so unscrupulous a diplomatist; but such was the morality of the day. Comines had good sense enough to consider tyranny a bad speculation, but he had not virtuous feeling enough to hate the tyrant; he so admired skilful politics, that he could excuse a bad action if it was cleverly performed.

His description of the last years of Louis XI. is a striking piece of history, whence poets and novelists have borrowed

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\* Froissart also wrote poetry. There is a fine edition of a translation of his works by Johnes, London, 1806. A cheap reprint of it has also appeared in New York.

† Born 1445. Died 1509.



themes in later times; but neither the romance of Sir Walter Scott\* nor the song of Béranger† does justice to the reality as presented by the pen of the curious, faithful, and attentive Comines. The details of misery at once royal and human, coming from a witness who never quitted the chamber, and who describes what he saw without aim at dramatic effect, render this part of the history a singularly graphic picture.

At the death of his master, Comines was compelled to surrender the spoils of the innocent by which he had been enriched. His political fortune never flourished again, but his years of obscurity have given his country a great historian, and secured his own immortality.‡

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\* Quentin Durward.

† The song is entitled *Louis XI.*

‡ A translation of his Memoirs is published in Bohn's Library.



## THE AGE OF TRANSITION, 1500-1650.

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### VI.—THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORM.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS—MAROT—RABELAIS—MONTAIGNE—CHARRON—ST.  
FRANÇOIS DE SALES—SATIRE MENIPPEE.

DURING the ages we have hitherto surveyed, the intelligence of France and the neighboring countries seems to have been divided into two great sections. On the one hand, there was the bold, chivalric mind of young Europe speaking with tongues of yesterday; while, on the other, was the ecclesiastical mind, professional and dominant, delivering itself in the corrupted Latin. Erudition and civilization did not then go hand in hand. Here was one life of gayety and rude disorder, the life of the court and castle, as depicted in the literature we have been scanning; but all this time there had been a life of solitude and reminiscence, the lot of men who, separated from the world and protected from violence, had not only been conning the lives of saints and singing the Gregorian chant, but studying the literary remains of antiquity, and transcribing and treasuring them for unborn generations. Hitherto these two sections had held on their respective courses apart, or they had encountered as deadly foes; now they were to meet and blend in harmony; the vernacular poets, on the one hand, borrowing both thought and expression from the classics; and the clergy, on the other, becoming purveyors of light literature to the court circles: while deadly feuds on religious points

were to open a more serious career to the French language. We are briefly to remark the steps of this process.

The fifteenth century, though somewhat barren, had prepared for the fecundity of succeeding ages. The revival of the study of ancient literature, promoted as it was by the downfall of Constantinople, chasing the heirs of classic antiquity into France; printing occurring at this juncture to multiply copies of recovered master-pieces; the discovery of a new world in the west; the depression of feudalism; the triumph of monarchy; and the consequent elevation of the middle classes of the people: all these circumstances concurred in the promotion of good taste and the rapid improvement of the human intellect.

During the early part of the sixteenth century, all the ardor of the French mind was turned to the study of languages; the men of genius had no higher ambition than to be grammarians, no study but to think, to feel, to love, and to hate in the dead languages. Men who had attained to celebrity in the sphere of knowledge which belonged to the day, began their studies over again in their declining years, and went in their gray hairs to the schools where the languages of Homer and of Cicero were taught. Some, in their zeal to facilitate the general possession of the ancient classics, undertook themselves to direct the printing-presses which they supplied by their writings. Erasmus and Budé wrote with one hand, and printed with the other. In civil and political society, the same enthusiasm manifested itself in the imitation of antique manners: people dressed in Greek and Roman fashion, borrowed from them the usages of life, and even made a point of dying like the heroes of Plutarch, delivering grave discourses, which they appeared to recite from memory.

This impulse came first from Italy, whence the French wars had been the means of bringing the Greek and Latin books which, it would seem, the Italians would never otherwise

have shared with their Gallic neighbors, whom they heartily despised.

The religious reformation came soon afterwards, to restore the Christian, as the revival of letters had brought back the pagan antiquity. Ignorance was now dissipated; religion was disengaged from philosophy, and the scolastics forced to disappear. The Renaissance, as the revival of antique learning was called, and the Reformation at first made common cause, having for their enemies all the abettors of ignorance and superstition. The monks, for instance, used to say in their sermons: "There has lately been discovered a new language, which is called Greek. It must be carefully guarded against. This language teems with every kind of heresy."

One of those who most greedily imbibed the spirit both of *La Réforme* and *La Renaissance*, was MARGUERITE DE VALOIS,\* the elder sister of Francis I. She studied in the original the works of Erasmus, whose views of moderate reform were those she embraced; knew enough of Greek to read Sophocles; and learned Hebrew from Paul Paradis, for whom she procured a professor's chair in the College of France. Though Marguerite was favorable to religious reform, she contrived to continue a most faithful subject of her brother; and through his steady regard for her, he obtained the credit of many generous actions which were truly hers. It would seem that the protection which he accorded to literature, and which obtained for him the title of *Père des Lettres*, was really the work of his sister, which, however, was with some justice attributed to him, since he did not disavow it. But Francis himself was a man of superficial education and narrow views, more fond of arts than of letters, or, as it was said in the seventeenth century, of buildings than of writings.

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\* See her *Life* by Martha Walker Freer, London, and Miss Pardoe's *Francis I.*

To us it seems strange that the chef d'œuvre of this learned and religious lady was *L'Heptaméron, ou l'histoire des Amants fortunés*, a work on the plan and in the spirit of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, which a lady of our times would be ashamed to own acquaintance with, much more to adopt as a model. But it would appear that the gravity and propriety of the remarks with which the virtuous widow Oysille intersperses the tales, was, and in the eyes of some critics is still, deemed a sufficiently redeeming feature. The rest of her apology must be found in the manners of the times. Let us not forget that the *Spectator*, a work of comparative recency and in our own country, was deemed a perfect oracle of religion and morals, yet few of us would like to place it entire in the hands of our daughters.

This was not the first essay that the French had made in borrowing from Italian story-tellers what these had originally drawn from the *fabliaux*. About the middle of the fifteenth century, the dauphin of France, afterwards Louis XI., had been entertained at the court of the Duke of Burgundy with tales imitated from Boccaccio; and these had been afterwards collected by some unknown editor under the title of *Cents nouvelles du Roi Louis XI.* They are, however, both in matter and style, very inferior to the *Heptaméron*, which is to be remarked as the earliest French prose that can be read without a glossary.

In the year 1518, when Marguerite was twenty-six years of age, she received from her brother a gifted poet as a valet-de-chambre. This was CLEMENT MAROT,\* between whom and the learned princess a poetical commerce was commenced and actively maintained. If she permitted him to address her in verses of gallantry, such was the right of every poet, however

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\* Born 1505—died 1544. In connexion with Beza he translated the Psalms. His brilliant, epigrammatic style is called the *style marotique*.



humble, towards ladies of the highest rank and strictest virtue ; it was a relic of the chivalrous manners which the reigning king was seeking to restore. And thus he sang :—

A gentleness spread over a fair face  
Passing in beauty the most beautiful ;  
A chaste eye, in whose light there lies no stain ;  
A frank discourse, so simple and so true  
That who should hear it through an hundred years  
Would never weary in that century ;  
A lively wit ; a learning which makes marvel ;  
And such sweet gracefulness diffused o'er all,  
And ever present in her speech or silence ;  
That fain I would my power did suffice  
To pen her merit on this paper down,  
Even as it is written in my heart.  
And all these precious gifts, and thousand more,  
Cling to a body of high parentage ;  
And tall, and straight ; and formed in its fair stature  
As if it were to be at once adored  
By men and gods. Oh ! would I were a prince !  
That I might proffer to thee my poor service.  
Yet why a prince ? Is not the gentle mountain  
Often of aspect fairer than the crag ?  
Do not low olive-tree and humble rose  
Charm rather than the oak ? Is't not less peril  
To swim the streamlet than to stem the river ?  
I know I levy and defray no armies,  
I launch no fleets, whose prize might be a Helen's.  
But if my fortune had endowed me so,  
I would have died, or else have conquered thee.  
And if I am in fact no conqueror,  
Yet do my will and spirit make me one.  
My fame, like that of kings, fills provinces.  
If they o'ercome men in fair feat of arms,  
In my fair verse I overcome in turn.  
If they have treasure, I have treasure also,  
And of such things as lie not in their coffers.  
If they are powerful, I hold more power,

For I have that to make my love immortal.  
 Nor this I say in vaunt, but strong desire  
 That thou shouldst understand how never yet  
 I saw thy match in this life of this world :  
 Nor breathing being who the power owned  
 Thus to make subject mine obedience.

Marot went somewhat further than his mistress in his religious views : he imbibed the principles of Calvin, whose credit, it is said, saved him from capital punishment, merited by some grave offence. He had drunk deeply also into the spirit of the Renaissance, and translated parts of Virgil and Ovid ; but the general opinion is, that he displayed the poet more truly before he became either a theologian or a classic scholar. Marot is considered the last type of the old French-school, of that combination of grace and archness, of elegance and simplicity, of familiarity and propriety, "which," says Guizot, "has not been entirely lost among us, and which perhaps forms the most truly national characteristic of our poetic literature ; the only one for which we are indebted to ourselves alone, and in which we have never been imitated."\*

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\*Here is a specimen of Marot's French :—

MAROT AU ROY, POUR AVOIR ESTÉ DESROBÉ.

Voilà comment depuis neuf mois en ça  
 Je suis traicté. Or ce que me laissa  
 Mon laronneau, longtemps a, l'ay vendu,  
 Et en sirops et juleps despendu ;  
 Ce neantmoins, ce que je vous en mande  
 N'est pour vous faire ou requeste ou demande ;  
 Je ne veux point tant de gens ressembler  
 Qui n'ont soucy autre que d'assembler :  
 Tant qu'ils vivront, ils demanderont eux ;  
 Mais je commence à devenir honteux,  
 Et ne veux plus à vos dons m'arrester.  
 Je ne dis pas, si voulez rien prester,  
 Que ne le prenne. Il n'est point de presteur,  
 S'il veut prester, qui ne face un debteur ;

1483-1553.

FRANCIS RABELAIS\* was one of the most remarkable persons that figured in the Renaissance to which we have referred; a learned scholar, physician, and philosopher, though known to posterity chiefly as a profane humorist. He is designated by Lord Bacon "the great jester of France;" and the gross buffooneries amassed in his nondescript romance have rendered his name a common mark for any or every extravagance of unknown or doubtful parentage; so that, like the ancient Hercules, he is noted with posterity for many feats which he never performed, and these by no means to his credit.

Rabelais was born at Chinon, a small town of Touraine, about the year 1483, though the precise date is unknown, as well as the character of his parentage. He received the first rudiments of education at the convent of Séville, but made so little progress that he was removed to another, where his career seemed also unpromising, and where the greatest advantage he derived was that of becoming known to Du Bellay, who afterwards became bishop of Paris, and continued his steady friend. From school, Rabelais passed into a convent of the order of St. Francis in Poitou, and now began to devote him-

Et sçavez-vous, sire, comment je paye?  
 Nul ne le sçait, si premier ne l'essaye.  
 Vous me devrez, si je puis, de retour;  
 Et vous feray encores un bon tour;  
 A celle fin qu'il n'y ait faute nulle,  
 Je vous feray une belle sedulle,  
 A vous payer (sans usure il s'entend)  
 Quand on verra tout le monde content;  
 Ou, si voulez, à payer ce sera  
 Quand vostre los et renom cessera.

\* His Biography is also given in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia, in the volume on Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France. A valuable article on his works may be found in the Foreign Quarterly Review, vol. 31.

self to study, though under most unfavorable circumstances. The brethren among whom his lot was cast, had no library, nor did they understand the use of one. Only some of them knew a little Latin; while others, instead of a breviary, carried about a wine-flask which exactly resembled one. Rabelais became a distinguished preacher, and devoted the proceeds of his sermons and masses to provide himself with books. The animosity of the brethren was excited; they were jealous of his superior attainments and his success as a pulpit orator; but his crying sin was the study of Greek literature, which they denounced as unholy and profane. After annoying and harassing him in various ways, they condemned him to live *in pace*—that is, to linger out the remainder of his life in one of the prison-cells of the convent, with bread and water for his only sustenance, and himself as his sole companion. The immediate occasion of his being thus buried alive is variously stated. According to some, the young priest had, by way of frolic, disfigured the image of St. Francis; while others have it, that, on the festival of this saint, he removed the image, and himself took its place; that he escaped detection till the grotesque devotions of the multitude and the rogueries of the monks overcame his gravity; and the simple people, seeing the muscles of the face relaxing, cried out “A miracle!” while the monks, who perceived the real state of the case, dismissed the laity, made their false brother descend from his niche, scourged him severely, and doomed him to solitary confinement for life. Fortunately for the poor wretch, his talents and attainments had gained for him friends who were powerful enough not only to procure his release, but a license from the pope to pass from the outraged order of St. Francis to that of the Benedictines, which was distinguished for learning, and which merits the gratitude of posterity for its labors in preserving the classic remains of antiquity. Doubtless it was to poor Rabelais a change for the better; but being entirely dis-



gusted with monastic life, he presently cast off the frock and cowl, without license or dispensation, forsook the convent, and took to a wandering life as a secular priest. Next, he wholly divested himself of the sacerdotal character, and studied medicine at Montpellier, where he took the successive degrees of bachelor, licentiate, and doctor. After some time, he was appointed a professor, and lectured on the works of Hippocrates and Galen; his superior knowledge of Greek enabling him to correct the omissions, falsifications, and interpolations of former translators, while he carefully collated the best copies of the original. Speaking of mistranslation, he says: "If this be a fault in other books, it is a crime in books of medicine; for in these the addition or omission of the smallest word, even the misplacing of a point, may endanger the lives of thousands." Accordingly his edition of Hippocrates has always been in high repute among physicians and scholars.

It was a still more formidable difficulty to introduce the better medical system of the Greek into actual use. Mountebanks and astrologers, he avers, were preferred to well-informed physicians, even by the great; while the multitude was plunged in worse than Cimmerian darkness, clinging to ignorance and absurdity, like those shipwrecked mariners who hold on by a beam or a rag of the shattered vessel, instead of making an effort to swim, and find out their mistake only when they are sinking without hope.

From about the year 1534, Rabelais was in the immediate service of Cardinal du Bellay, and a prime favorite in the court circles of Paris and Rome, to which he was thus introduced. It was probably during this period, including seventeen or eighteen years, that he published, at various times, the successive parts of the work on which his popular fame has rested—the lives of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. It consists of the life and adventures of these two gigantic heroes, who were father and son, with the waggeries and practical jokes of

Panurge their jongleur, and the blasphemies and obscenities of the redoubtable Friar John—a fighting, swaggering, drinking monk. With these are mingled dissertations, argumentations, sophistries, and allegorical satires in abundance. That peculiar state of mind which was undermining institutions and creeds in all parts of Europe; that zeal for antique study, which looked on Gothic traditions with contempt, and viewed the revival of Greek and Roman literature as the dawn of a new and glorious day; that disgust at prejudice, and that thirst for something that would satisfy reason—all are reflected here, but refracted too, by the fantasy of the author, into a thousand grotesque apparitions, distorted, indeed, but significant.

The publication of the work created a perfect uproar at the Sorbonne, and among the monks, who were its principal victims. But the cardinals enjoyed its humor, and contrived to protect the author; while the king himself (Francis I.) being applied to, to seal its condemnation, had it read through to him, and pronounced it innocent and “delectable.” It became the book of the day; no one making any pretensions to be a gentleman could be ignorant of it; it passed through countless editions, numerous purgations, and endless commentaries; more than one translation was made into English, and an allusion in Shakspeare leads us to believe it was familiar in England. And yet it is agreed on all hands, that there exists not another work, admitted as literature, that will bear a moment’s comparison with it for indecency and profanity; while, at the same time, its coarseness is sheerly disgusting and repulsive, rather than of a nature to stimulate the passions, or gratify the vicious tastes of the voluptuary. Few can now study it in the original, on account of its antique and provincial language:\* none have any excuse for reading a translation. In-

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\* The following is a specimen:—“*Epitherses, navigant de Grece en Italie, dedans une nauf chargée de diverses marchandises et plusieurs voyageurs, sur le soir cessant le vent aupres des Isles Echinades, lesquelles sont*

deed, it would appear there is no great temptation ; he whose taste for the humorous has been formed by the London Charivari School of the present day, has not patience to wade through the heavy dissertations, and search through the filth of Rabelais, to enjoy here and there a dash of humor of a species quite out of date. His work is now only a curiosity and a collection of historical symbols for the student of antique literature. "Time was," says an eminent critic, "when all Europe could roar lustily at the drolleries of Rabelais ; now, it is a labor to read him, and the roar has dwindled down to the smile of the scholar. It is well that it is so. The name of Rabelais does not perish, but the book recedes from the gaze of all but those who have a right to peruse it."

The satires of Rabelais, unlike those of preceding ages, bore hard on the ecclesiastical system itself, and not merely on the vices of those who maintained it. Hence the religious reformers of the day hoped for a time that he would prove a powerful agent in the great work which they had undertaken. Calvin, especially, calculated on drawing largely upon this treasury of learning, and wit, and sarcasm, for the overthrow of the Romish Church. But it was ere long discovered that Rabelais was a mere scoffer, not a reformer ; that he could aim a sly blow at the hypocritical Calvinists, as he chose to call

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entre la Morée et Tunis, fut leur nauf portée pres de Paxes. Estant la abordée, aucuns des voyageurs dormans, autres veillans, autres bevans et souppans, fut de l'Isle de Paxes ouïe une voix de quelqu'un qui hautement appelloit Thamous : auquel cri tous furent espouvantés. Cettui Thamous estoit leur pilot natif d'Egypte, mais non connu de nom, fors à quelques uns des voyageurs. Fut secondement ouïe cette voix : laquelle appelloit Thamous en cris horrifiques. Personne ne respondant, mais tous restant en silence et trepidation, en tierce fois cette voix fut ouïe plus terrible que devant. Dont avint que Thamous respondit : Je suis ici, que me demandes tu ? que veux tu que je fasse ? Lors fut icelle voix plus hautement ouïe, lui disant et commandant, quand il seroit en Palodes, publier et dire que Pan le grand dieu estoit mort."

them; and that he was content to revel on the temporal things of the church whose spiritual things he exposed to ridicule.

It is undoubted that Rabelais was not only a humorist on paper, but a bon-vivant and a practical joker, like our own Dean Swift, who has been largely indebted to him. Yet it does not appear that his personal habits were more than usually profligate. His kind patron procured for him in his old age the *cure* or rectory of Meudon, where he is said to have lived in a most exemplary manner, spending much of his time in teaching the poor to read and the children to sing. He is believed to have been about seventy years of age when he died in 1553.

As Rabelais was the leading type of La Renaissance, so was CALVIN\* of La Réforme.

This celebrated reformer, born at Noyon, in Picardy (1509–1564), was the son of a cooper, and educated for the priesthood of the Romish Church; which career, however, he early abandoned for jurisprudence, and studied at Bourges under the famous Alciati.† Having connexions among the followers of Luther, he became acquainted with his principles of religious reform, and not only embraced them, but went considerably further in his views. In 1532, he began to propagate his doctrines in Paris, but finding himself in danger of imprisonment, he quitted France, and passed the remainder of his life at Geneva, where he organized a church according to his own views, and ruled with a rod of iron in matters of faith and church government. Here, in 1535, he published in Latin his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which is an exposition of the reformed faith as held by him, and which being afterwards translated by himself into French, became the standard of Protestantism in this language. This well-known

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\* See Henry's Life of Calvin.

† See Italian Literature, page 232.



work is distinguished for great severity of doctrine, embracing especially that of the absolute election of a certain number of individuals to eternal salvation, and the equally unconditional reprobation of the remainder of the human race. The epistle dedicatory to Francis I., with which this work is prefaced, is considered a model of eloquence.\* After the Institutes, the most celebrated work of Calvin, also written by himself in French as well as Latin, is a *Commentary on the Scriptures*, which is highly valued by many who do not fully subscribe to the doctrines of the Institutes.

Intellect continued to struggle with its fetters; and while the reformers, resting on the written word, pursued their perilous labors, and Ramus, with great circumspection, elevated the statue of Plato beside that of Aristotle, the note which Rabelais had sounded did not fall to the ground. Many there were who saw like him through the corruptions of the Romish Church, and mistrusted the whole system of ecclesiastical

\* Here is a part of it;—"Au commencement que je m'appliquay à escrire ce présent livre, je ne pensoye rien moins, Sire (*François I<sup>er</sup>*), que d'escrire choses qui fussent présentées à vostre Majesté. Seulement mon propos estoit d'enseigner quelques rudiments, par lesquels ceux qui seroient touchez d'aucune bonne affection de Dieu, fussent instruits à vraye piété. . . . Laquelle mienne délibération on pourra facilement appercevoir du livre; en tant que l'ay accommodé à la plus simple forme d'enseigner qu'il m'a esté possible. Mais voyant que la fureur d'aucuns iniques s'estoit tant élevée en vostre royaume, qu'elle n'avoit laissé lieu aucun à toute saine doctrine: il m'a semblé estre expédient de faire servir ce présent livre tant d'instruction à ceux que premierement j'avoye délibéré d'enseigner, que aussi de confession de foy envers vous: dont vous cognoissiez quelle est la doctrine contre laquelle, d'une telle rage, furieusement sont enflambez ceux qui par feu et par glaive troublent aujourd'hui votre royaume.

"Or, c'est vostre office, Sire, de ne destourner ne voz oreilles, ne vostre courage (*cœur*) d'une si juste défense, principalement quand il est question de si grande chose. C'est à savoir comment la gloire de Dieu sera maintenue sur terre, comment sa vérité retiendra son honneur et dignité; comment le regne du Christ demeurera en son entier. O matiere digne de voz oreilles, digne de vostre jurisdiction, digne de vostre throsne royal?"

polity as by law established, yet did not pin their faith on the dicta of the austere and haughty Calvin. The almost inevitable consequence was the no-creed of the freethinker—a wide and universal scepticism replacing the former implicit subjection to rampant dogmatism.

The most eminent type of this school was MONTAIGNE, who, in those confessions and conversations which he was pleased to call *Essays*, shook the foundations of all the creeds of his day, without offering anything to replace them.

Montaigne is considered the earliest philosophical writer in French prose; the first of those who contributed, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, to direct the minds of their countrymen to the study of human nature. In doing so, he takes himself as his subject; he dissects all his feelings, emotions, and tendencies, with the coolness and unconcern of an operating surgeon, and treats his readers to a lecture thereupon. Here is nothing fantastic, as in Rabelais, or polemic, as in Calvin; but a calm and serious analysis of his own early education, and the subsequent development of his intellectual and moral character. The consequence is, that nobody can read his works without becoming his most familiar acquaintance. And to a singular power of self-investigation, and an acute observation of the actions of men, he added great affluence of thought and excursiveness of fancy, so as to be commonly considered a most attractive writer, notwithstanding the egotism which is so generally offensive in an essayist. It must be added, that as he would have considered it unmanly and dishonest to conceal anything about himself, he has told much that our modern ideas of decorum would deem better untold, and thus rendered his works unfit for a family library. It has been thought that they might be purified from these blemishes, and that a well-executed *Spirit of Montaigne* would be a most fascinating book. An attempt of the kind in French was not

successful; and in the absence of even an attempt at it in English, we offer the reader a cursory glance of the least exceptionable parts, premising, however, that nothing but the veritable language of the old confabulator can convey an adequate idea of his vivacity, energy, and pleasing simplicity.

Montaigne's four volumes of *Essays* are, as we have intimated, principally occupied with personal narrative, and disquisitions on his own character, which run thus:—He was the eldest of the five sons of the Seigneur de Montaigne, and born at the family castle in 1533. The father's anxiety to bestow upon him the best possible education, induced him, even before the birth of the child, to study the subject, and call in to his help the most learned men to whom he had access. He was thus led to frame a system, which has been considered in some sort the basis of Rousseau's; its leading principle being, that the soul is to be nourished in gentleness and liberty, without severity or restraint, and that knowledge is to be acquired by free-will, and not forced upon the youthful student. "Accordingly, the good father whom God gave me," says Montaigne, "sent me, while in my cradle, to one of his poor villages, and kept me there while I was at nurse, and longer, to inure me to the hardest and most ordinary habits of life. He had another idea, also, which was, that I should early form alliance with that class of men who need our assistance, and should rather cultivate the affections of those who should stretch out their arms to me, than of those who would turn their backs. He therefore selected people of the lowest condition for my baptismal sponsors, that I might attach myself to them." Another principle was, that from his infancy he should never be allowed to play at anything in which trickery or artifice was employed, in order that he might learn perfect uprightness of conduct. Having understood that a child's brain is apt to be injured by awaking suddenly, the father employed a musician constantly to attend upon the infant with the soft sounds

of music as he awoke. Desiring that his son should not suffer the usual harassment incident to the learning of ancient languages, the elder Montaigne determined that Latin should be as his son's mother-tongue—that which he should first learn instead of the vernacular; and, accordingly, he engaged the services of a German who was a good Latin scholar, and understood no French. This man, assisted by two others of somewhat less erudition, performed all the functions usually allotted to a nursery-maid, carrying the child about, and talking to him in the language of Cicero. It was the rule of the house that nothing else should be spoken in his hearing; "and it was strange," says our author, "what progress every one made. My father and mother acquired enough of Latin to speak it occasionally, as did also the other servants, who were fond of me. In short, we talked so much Latin, that it overflowed from the castle into the villages around, where there still remain firmly rooted several Latin names for workmen and their tools. At the age of six I knew no more French than Arabic; and without study, book, grammar, or tuition, without a rod, and without a tear, I had learned as pure a Latin as the schoolmaster could teach, for I had no other language to corrupt it with." It was intended that he should learn Greek as a game; and the rest may be judged from this specimen. But according to his own account, the young Montaigne was an unlikely subject, "for," says he, "though my health was good, and my disposition docile and gentle, I was, at the same time, so heavy and dull and sleepy, that I could not be aroused, even to play. Beneath this dull exterior, however, I nourished a bold imagination; I saw well what I saw, and formed opinions beyond my age.\* My mind was slow, never moving unless it was led; my understanding tardy, my inventive faculties in-

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\* He here gives the first hint of that scepticism which is more fully developed in the sequel of the work.



dolent ; and, above all, I had an incredible want of memory. Now the good old man began to fear lest the scheme he had so carefully projected was going to prove a failure in practice ; and as all those who are furiously eager for a cure allow themselves to be swayed by all manner of advice, he thought it safest to yield to the prevailing opinion, and sent me at six years of age to a public school, selecting that of Guienne, as the best in France, and sparing no pains to procure the most accomplished private tutors. Here my Latin deteriorated, and I lost the habit of speaking it ; but I read *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, and other Latin classics, with avidity, at seven or eight years of age, my master conniving at it, and being perfectly easy as to the preparation of the other lessons that were prescribed to me. No one feared that I should do any harm, but only that I should do nothing ; no one anticipated that I should become wicked, but it was apprehended that I might be useless. Meanwhile, my mind continued its private operations, and formed independent opinions on various subjects, digesting them alone, and without participation."

The most obvious results of this education seem to have been, that the defective memory continued defective throughout life. His personal indolence remained, but in connexion with much ardor of mind, a lively imagination, an inquiring disposition, a cheerful, though somewhat unequal temper, and great enthusiasm of affection where he formed an attachment. Though he lived at a time when party-spirit ran high, he kept himself aloof from the dissensions that were abroad, and his life was a thing singularly apart from the events of the age in which he lived. The event to which he himself gives most prominence is his friendship for Etienne de la Boëtie, whom he considered the greatest man he had ever known.\* Though in some re-

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\* En l'amitié de quoy ie parle, elles (*les âmes*) se meslent et confondent l'une en l'autre d'un meslange si universel, qu'elles effacent et ne retrou-

spects very dissimilar characters, they formed an attachment for each other upon mere hearsay, before they had an opportunity of meeting. "We, as it were, embraced each other's names, and at our first meeting, which was by chance and in a large assembly, we found ourselves so drawn together, and so known to each other, that hereafter nothing was nearer than we were to one another." After the lapse of four years, a short severe illness deprived Montaigne of his beloved friend, and he seems never to have forgotten the loss. "If I compare the rest of my life," he says, "though, with the blessing of God, I have passed it agreeably and peacefully, having taken the good things that came to me spontaneously and naturally, without seeking others; yet if I compare the whole of it, I say, with the four years during which it was given me to enjoy the dear society of this person, it is mere smoke—it is a dark and wearisome night. I have dragged it out painfully since I lost him, and the very pleasures that have presented themselves have doubled the sense of my loss instead of proving any consolation. We used to share everything, and methinks I rob him of his portion. I was so accustomed to be two in everything, that I now seem but half of myself."

A few years afterwards—that is, at the age of thirty-three—Montaigne married, but not, as it appears, from any decided wish to do so, or choice of a partner from particular attach-

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vent plus la cousture qui les a ioinctes. Si on me presse de dire pourquoy je l'aymoys (*La Boëtie*), ie sens que cela ne se peult exprimer qu'en respondant: "Parce que c'estoit luy, parce que c'estoit moy." Il y a, au delà de tout mon discours et de tout ce que j'en puis dire particulièrement, ie ne sçais quelle force inexplicable et fatale, mediatrice de cette union. Nous nous cherchions avant que de nous estre veus, et par des rapports que nous oyions l'un de l'autre, qui faisoient en notre affection plus d'effort que ne porte la raison des rapports; ie croys par quelque ordonnance du ciel. Nous nous embrassions par nos noms: et à nostre première rencontre, qui feust par hazard en une grande feste et compaignie de ville, nous nous trouvasmes si prins, si cogneus, si obligez entre nous, que rien dez lors ne nous feut si proche que l'un à l'autre.

ment. He was simply led by the common usage of the world around him, his easy temper borne along by extraneous circumstances. On trial, he became noway reconciled to wedded life, but he says he conducted himself better than he expected. "A man may, with prudence, retain his liberty; but when he has once entered on the obligation, he must observe the laws of a common duty." Montaigne seems to have made a good, though not remarkably fond husband and father; and while he did his duty in these relations, it appears that he manifested his superior predilection for ties of his own formation, by adopting as a daughter a young lady of great merit, who was afterwards esteemed one of the most learned and estimable women of the age.

Montaigne had been intended for the bar, and had studied law after leaving college; but he disliked and abandoned it, as he did the office of counsellor to the parliament of Bordeaux, which he found unsuitable to his tastes. He inherited the estates of Montaigne at his father's death, and lived scrupulously within his patrimonial income, as the surest way of enjoying the ease which he loved, and freedom from distracting care.

During his whole life, France was distracted with the struggles between the Roman Catholics and the Huguenots. Montaigne, though attached to the kingly and Catholic party, avoided taking any active share in the conflict; and almost the only apparent connexion between his life and his times, is found in the comparative tranquillity which he enjoyed while most others of similar rank were compelled, or believed themselves compelled, to expose both life and property for the creed which they avowed. "I regard our king," he says, "with a mere legitimate and political affection, neither attracted nor repelled by private interest, and in this I am satisfied with myself. In the same way, I am but moderately attached to the popular cause, and am not apt to surrender myself in a

deep-felt and enthusiastic manner to matters of opinion. Let Montaigne, if it must, be swallowed up in the public ruin; yet, if there is no necessity, I shall be thankful to fortune to save it. I treat both parties equally, and say nothing to one that I could not say to the other; only with the accent a little changed, for there is no consideration of expediency that could induce me to tell a falsehood." Of course he had to suffer the usual inconvenience of moderation during such troubles—that of being considered fair game to both parties. Yet his philosophy did something for him here. His mode of preserving his castle from pillage was highly characteristic. "Defence," he says, "stimulates to enterprise, and intimidation to injury. I damped the ardor of the soldiery by making the conquest of my house a thing that might be achieved without risk or military glory, for what is done with danger is always honorable during a time when the course of justice is suspended. My door was shut against no one who knocked; it had no guard but a porter, according to ancient usage—a ceremony not serving so much to defend my abode, as to offer an easier and more courteous entrance. I had no sentinel but that which the stars kept for me. A gentleman does wrong to appear in a state of defence if he is not perfectly so. I was resolved neither to fear nor to save myself by halves. Among so many armed houses, I alone, in France, I believe, confided mine to the protection of Heaven only, and have never removed either money or plate, or title-deed or tapestry. If unreserved gratitude can secure the divine favor, I shall enjoy it to the end; if not, I have gone on long enough to render my escape remarkable: it has lasted now thirty years." He gives an interesting account of an instance in which he was saved by this philosophy. A certain gentleman, who was his neighbor, but a leader of the opposite party, had laid a plan of taking Montaigne Castle by surprise; he rode up to the gate in apparent hurry and dismay, and implored admission, saying that he was



pursued by enemies, and incapable of defence, having been separated from his party, who, he apprehended, had been either slain or taken prisoners. Montaigne received and endeavored to comfort him. Presently five or six more presented themselves, with the same appearance of terror; and soon more and more, till there were about thirty, well armed and equipped, but pretending that they were in imminent danger, and required shelter. When Montaigne's suspicions were awakened, he deemed it best to go on as he had begun, and ordered them all to be admitted, "being," says he, "a man who gladly commits himself to fortune, and believing that we err in not fully confiding in Heaven." His frankness and composure disarmed the treachery of the leader, as he himself afterwards confessed; he remounted his horse, and departed, to the no small astonishment of his followers, who were watching for the signal to fall upon the host and take possession of the place.

As he advanced in years, Montaigne became the subject of a painful disease, which put his philosophy to the test; and having derived from his father a sovereign contempt for physicians, he would use no remedy except that which nature had provided in the mineral and thermal springs found in various parts of the continent. He accordingly undertook a tour through Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, performing it chiefly on horseback, in company with a few friends, while the luggage was carried in hired vehicles. His mode of travelling was of a piece with all the rest that he tells of himself. If the road to the right hand was bad, he took that to the left; if he felt too ill to ride, he remained where he was until he recovered; if he found that he had passed anything that he wished to see, he turned back. His friends, it is true, did not altogether relish these zigzag proceedings, but his only reply to their remonstrances was, that he was bound to no place but that which now held him; that he could not go out of his

way, since his only object was to visit new scenes; and that, so long as he never travelled the same road or visited the same spot twice, his design was fulfilled. His mind was ever on the stretch to discover novelties and converse with strangers; and this excitement enabled him to a great extent to forget his sufferings. After above five months' travelling, the party found themselves in Rome, where Montaigne rambled about without a guide, endeavoring to discover the localities with which his early studies had rendered him familiar. He was cordially received by the pope, who was glad to have a man of rank and talent on the side of the old religion in those days of defalcation. The censors of the press had found several faults in the two books of Montaigne's Essays that were already published—such as, his citations from heretical poets; his improper use of the word "fortune;" his disapproval of torture and capital punishments. And Montaigne, being taken to account, simply replied that he had put these things down as his own opinions, not supposing them to be erroneous; and that he apprehended the censor had not always rightly understood what he meant to convey. The pope now begged that he would not make himself uneasy about the matter, assured him there was no doubt of the goodness of his intentions, and his attachment to the true church; and that he could make any needful alterations in a future edition. The citizenship of Rome was conferred upon him by a papal bull, resplendent with seals and golden letters, and he was implored to exert his eloquence on the side of the holy apostolic church against its numerous and powerful foes.

Montaigne's return home was hastened by the intelligence that he had been elected mayor of Bordeaux; an office which he would gladly have declined, being, as he declared, without memory, without industry, without experience, and without vigor; without party-spirit, also, or ambition, or avarice, or capability of violence. But the king interposing his command,

he felt obliged to undertake the office; and the laissez-faire system, which was the result of his negative merits, seems to have worked well, as he was re-elected when the first term of his office expired.

Towards the close of life he was a great sufferer; but his calm philosophy and presence of mind never forsook him. He is said to have risen from his bed during his last illness, and opening his cabinet, to have paid his servants and other legatees the sums specified in his will, apprehending that his heirs might raise difficulties on the subject. Feeling his end approaching, he sent for some gentlemen in the neighborhood to be with him in his last moments. On their arrival, he caused mass to be celebrated in his chamber; at the moment of the elevation, he attempted to raise himself, but fell back fainting, and thus expired, on the 13th of September, 1592, in the sixtieth year of his age.\*

CHARRON, who was the friend and disciple of Montaigne, was at least as bold a thinker, but inferior as a writer. In his book, *De la Sagesse*, he endeavored to show that human nature contains within itself the means of curing its own evils without the help of religion, which he treats as though it were a matter of mere speculation—a system of dogmas without practical influence. Others followed in the same steps, and affected, like him, to place scepticism at the service of good morals, if not of religion itself. “License,” says Vinet, “had to come before liberty; scepticism before philosophic inquiry; the school of Montaigne before that of Descartes.” On the other hand, ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES, in his *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*, taught that Christianity was a practical thing, and that the only cure for all the evils of human nature was to be found in the grace which it reveals. Entering into details

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\* See Emerson's Representative Men, and Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopedia.

with a delicacy unknown to Montaigne and Charron, he teaches how this remedy is to be sought and applied; what each individual, in short, ought to observe, in order to lead a Christian life in his own sphere.

In these struggles of thought, in this conflict of creeds, the language acquired vigor and precision, so that the functions of the Latin were gradually transferred to the vernacular. In the works of Calvin, it had appeared in a seriousness of tone and severe purity of style which commanded general respect. In the *Satire Ménippée*,\* it had exhibited both vigor and flexibility, proving here, as in the writings of the stern reformer, how much a language gains by plunging into the solemnities of religious conviction, laboring in the sphere of tangible interests, and mingling in the dust of public contro-

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\* An anonymous political satire, in which the leading personages in the state are represented as meeting for consultation, and confidentially avowing the motives which have induced them to support the league. The following is a specimen of its style:—"Il faut confesser que nous sommes pris à ce coup, plus serfs et plus esclaves que les chrestiens en Turquie et les juifs en Avignon. Nous n'avons plus de volonté, ni de voix au chapitre. Nous n'avons plus rien de propre que nous puissions dire cela est mien; tout est à vous, Messieurs, qui nous tenez le pied sur la gorge et qui remplissez nos maisons de garnisons. Nos privileges et franchises anciennes sont à vaul'eau: notre hostel de ville que j'ai veu estre l'asseuré refuge du secours des roys en leurs urgentes affaires, est a la boucherie: nostre cour de parlement est nulle: nostre Sorbonne est au bourdel, et l'université devenue sauvage. Mais l'extrémité de nos miseres est, qu'entre tant de malheurs et de necessitez, il ne nous est pas permis de nous plaindre, ny demander secours: et faut qu'ayants la mort entre les dents, nous disions que nous nous portons bien, et que sommes trop heureux d'estre malheureux pour si bonne cause. O Paris qui n'est plus Paris, mais une spelunke de bêtes farouches, une citadelle d'Espagnols, Wallons, et Néapolitains, un asyle et seure retraicte de voleurs, meurtriers et assassinateurs, ne veux-tu jamais te ressentir de ta dignité et te souvenir qui tu as esté, au prix de ce que tu es? ne veux-tu jamais te guarir de ceste frenesie qui pour un legitime et gratieux roy, t'a engendré cinquante roytelets et cinquante tyrans?"



versy. An easy and natural tone was imparted to it about the same time by AMYOT,\* professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Paris. He enriched the literature of France with elegant translations from Plutarch, Longus, and Heliodorus, in which he taught his vernacular to mingle Hellenic graces with those strictly French. But the poets led it away from this happy vein, and we must glance at their labors.

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\* Born 1513, died 1593. The following passage is extracted from his works: "Il estoit ia sur le seoir quand il (*Coriolan*) y arriva (à *Antium*), et y eut plusieurs gens qui le rencontrerent par les rues, mais personne ne le recogneut. Ainsi s'en alla il droit à la maison de Tullus, là où de primsault il entra iusques au fouyer, et illec s'asseit sans dire mot à personne, aiant le uisage couuert et la teste affublee: de quoy ceulx de la maison furent bien esbahis, et neantmoins ne l'ozerent faire leuer: car encore qu'il se cachast, si recognoissoit on ne sçays quoy de dignité en sa contenance et en son silence, et s'en allerent dire à Tullus qui soupportoit, ceste estrange façon de faire. Tullus se leua incontinent de table, et s'en allant deuers luy, luy demanda qui il estoit, et quelle chose il demandoit. Alors Martius se debouscha, et apres auoir demouré un peu de temps sans respondre, luy dit: " Si tu ne me cognois point encore, Tullus, et ne crois point à me veoir, que ie sois celuy que ie suis, il est force que ie me decelle, et me descouure moy mesme. Je suis Gaius Martius, qui ay fait et à toy en particulier, et à tous les Volsques en general, beaucoup de mauulx, lesquelz ie ne puis nier pour le surnom de *Coriolanus* que i'en porte: car ie n'ay recueilly autre fruit, ny autre recompense de tant de traualx que i'ay endurez, ny de tant de dangers ausquelz ie me suis exposé, que ce surnom, lequel tesmoigne la malueillance que uous deuez auoir encontre moy: il ne m'est demouré que cela seulement; tout le reste m'a esté osté par l'enuie et l'oultrage du peuple romain, et par la lascheté de la noblesse et des magistrats, qui m'ont abandonné, et m'ont souffert de chasser en exil, de manière que i'ay esté contraint de recourir comme humble suppliant à ton fouyer, non ia pour sauuer et asseurer ma uie, mais pour le desir que i'ay de me venger de ceulx qui m'ont ainsi chassé, ce que ie commence desia à faire, en mettant ma personne entre tes mains."

VII.—LIGHT LITERATURE.

RONSARD—HARDY—REGNIER—MALHERBE—BALZAC—VOITURE—MALLEVILLE—SCARRON—THE HÔTEL DE RAMBOUILLET—THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

RONSARD (1524–1585), the favorite poet of Mary\* Queen of Scots, flourished during the time that the rage for ancient literature was at its height. He traced the first outlines of modern French poetry, filling it with mythological allusions, and a higher style of poetical thought and feeling than had hitherto been known. This revolution cannot be so well understood by any explanation, as by a comparison of a few verses of his with some of Marot's on a similar subject.

Marot sang thus :—

Sur le printemps de ma jeunesse folle,  
Je ressemblois l'arondelle qui vole  
Puis çà, puis là : l'aage me conduisoit  
Sans peur ne soin, où le cœur me disoit,  
En la forest, sans la crainte des loups,  
Je m'en allois souvent cueillir le houx,  
Pour faire glus à prendre oyseaux ramages  
Tous différents de chantz et de plumages ;  
Ou me souloys, pour les prendre, entremettre  
A faire bries ou caiges pour les mettre :  
Ou transnouois les rivières profondes,  
Ou renforçois sur le genouil les fondes ;  
Puis d'en tirer droict et loin j'apprenois  
Pour chasser loups et abattre des noix.

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\* Mary found his poems a great solace during her imprisonment, and sent him a silver Parnassus with this inscription,

“A Ronsard, l'Apollon de la source des Muses.”

Several of his poems are addressed to her. See one in Longfellow's Poets and Poetry of Europe, p. 447. Queen Elizabeth of England sent him a very valuable diamond in token of her admiration of his genius. Tasso felt honored by his acquaintance, and Montaigne thought him fully equal to the best ancient poets.

But Ronsard thus:—

Quand j'estois jeune, ains qu'une amour nouvelle  
Ne se fust prise en ma tendre moelle,  
Je vivois bien heureux.  
Comme à l'envy les plus accortes filles  
Se travailloient par leurs flammes gentilles,  
De me rendre amoureux.

Mais tout ainsy qu'un beau poulain farouche  
Qui n'a masché le frein dedans sa bouche,  
Va seulet, escarté,  
N'ayant soucy, sinon d'un pied superbe,  
A mille bonds, fouler les fleurs et l'herbe,  
Vivant en liberté;

Ores il court le long d'un beau rivage;  
Ores il erre en quelque bois sauvage,  
Fuyant de saut en saut:  
De toutes part les poutres hennissantes  
Luy font l'amour, pour néant blandissantes,  
A luy qui ne s'en chaut.

Ainsy j'allois desdaignant les pucelles  
Qu'on estimoit en beautés les plus belles,  
Sans répondre à leur vueil:  
Lors je vivois, amoureux de moi-même,  
Content et gai, sans porter face blesme,  
Ny les larmes à l'œil.

J'avois escrite au plus haut de la face,  
Avecq' l'honneur une agréable audace,  
Pleine d'un franc désir:  
Avecq' le pied marchoit ma fantaisie  
Où je voulois, sans peur ni jalousie,  
Seigneur de mon plaisir, etc.

It is believed that France owes to Ronsard the first attempt at the ode and the heroic epic. In the former, notwithstanding many defects, he is considered as the herald of the Lyric Muse, having prepared the way for Malherbe, who is still

regarded as a model in this style. In the *Franciad*, he was less happy, even as the precursor of abler writers; for no Frenchman has ever been deemed worthy of a place among the epic poets of Europe, in the category with Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Camoëns, and Milton.

But Ronsard, and the numerous school which he formed, were not content with imitating the spirit and form of the ancients—they wanted to have the language too. Proud of their discoveries in the field of ancient poetry, they would have them transplanted wholly into French verse; and to this end they desired to have their own language subjected to combinations and inversions like those of Greek and Latin. Foreign roots and locutions began to overpower the reviving flexibility of the French idiom; and even Rabelais, the greatest enemy of this abuse, did not wholly escape the infection. “The riches of antiquity,” says Guizot, “were heaped upon it (the French language) like the heterogeneous spoils of a pillaged province, rather than as the products of a friendly country, disposed to furnish us with whatever our necessities required.”

Under the same influence the drama was restored by JOELLE and others, in the shape of translations and imitations. Towards the end of the century, however, there appeared a sort of reaction against this learned tragedy, led by ALEXANDER HARDY, who, with little or no original genius, produced about 1200 plays. He borrowed in every possible direction; imitated the Italian pastorals and the Spanish dramas; mingled the choirs and messengers of the antique with the pantalons of the Italian and the metamorphoses of the Spanish stage; but he awakened interest by a certain skill in conducting the plot. After twenty years, however, the general taste returned to the Greek and Roman school, and this rude miscellany of Hardy's was abandoned.



Poetry hardly returned to anything like freedom before MATHURIN REGNIER,\* whose lively and original satires† are among the finest monuments of that Gallic French which was too lightly esteemed by the precise school which followed.

The glorious reign of Henry IV. had been succeeded by the stormy minority of Louis XIII., and shortly before tranquillity was restored to the nation under the iron sceptre of Richelieu, MALHERBE,‡ a tyrant of words and syllables, ap-

\* Born 1573, died 1613.

† As the following :—

Jadis un loup, dit-on, que la fain espoignonne,  
Sortant hors de son fort rencontre une lionne,  
Rugissante à l'abort, et qui monstroit aux dents  
L'insatiable faim qu'elle avoit au dedans.  
Furieuse elle approche ; et le loup qui l'advise  
D'un langage flateur luy parle et la courtise :  
Car ce fut de tout temps que, ployant sous l'effort,  
Le petit cede au grand, et le foible au plus fort.  
Luy dis-je, qui craignoit que, faute d'autre proye,  
La beste l'attaquast, ses ruses il employe.  
Mais enfin le hazard si bien le secourut,  
Qu'un mulet gros et gras à leurs yeux apparut.  
Ils cheminent dispos, croyant la table preste,  
Ut s'approchent tous deux assez près de la beste.  
Le loup qui la cognoist, malin et deffiant,  
Luy regardant aux pieds, luy parloit en riant :  
D'où es-tu ? Qui es-tu ? quelle est ta nourriture,  
Ta race, ta maison, ton maistre, ta nature ?  
Le mulet, estonné de ce nouveau discours,  
De peur ingénieux aux ruses eut recours ;  
Et, comme les Normands, sans luy respondit : Voire !  
Compere, ce dit-il, je n'ay point de mémoire ;  
Et comme sans esprit ma grand'mere me vit,  
Sans m'en dire autre chose, au pied me l'escrivit.  
Lors il leve la jambe au jarret ramassée,  
Et d'un oeil innocent il couvroit sa pensée.

‡ Born 1565, died 1628 ; having lived under six kings.

peared as the reformer of poetry. The court, now comparatively undisturbed by political agitation, sought to fill the void which had long been occupied by public business, and became the arbiter of taste, to the superseding of a coterie of literary men, isolated from the world, and abandoned to the caprices of their own genius. Malherbe, a private gentleman of Rouen, attracted its attention by ridiculing the style of Ronsard; he was at once invited to Paris, constituted its laureate, and continually employed in furnishing for it that literature in which it was beginning to take delight. He exploded the affectation of Latin and Greek French, but inaugurated the extreme of formality in its stead. Everything in the matter of his verses was made subordinate to the manner. In striving after precision, he sacrificed energy; he forgot that the satisfaction of the ear is not the enlargement of the mind; and that, in the exactitude of his language, he was risking the substitution of polish for native beauty, of mere effect for genuine feeling. When he was reproached for not rendering accurately the sense of those authors whom he translated or paraphrased—for he had no invention of his own—he used to say, that he was not dressing meat for cooks. If he found a passage, either in an ancient Roman or modern Italian author, which he could throw into the shape of a pretty ode or sonnet to the satisfaction of the fashionables whom it was his business to please, it was little to him whether those who could read the originals were pleased or displeased.

BALZAC,\* in his pompously frivolous epistles, used prose as Malherbe did verse, and a numerous school of the same character was speedily formed. Not only odes and sonnets, but rondos, ballads, and epigrams came into favor; and perhaps the finest compositions of a superior kind would not have done

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\* Born 1594, died 1654.

so much to diffuse a taste for books as this piecemeal literature—this small-change of wit and learning adapted for circulation among a frivolous and slenderly-informed set of fashionable people. The works of VOITURE\* abound in the pleasantries and affected simplicity which best befit such compositions: the most trifling adventure, the death of a cat or dog, was transformed into a poem, in which truly there was no spirit of poetry, but a certain graceful facility, which was considered perfectly charming. Then, as though native affectation were not enough, the borrowed wit of Italian Marinism, which had been eagerly adopted in Spain, made its way thence into France, with Spanish exaggeration superadded. A disciple of this school declares, that the eyes of his mistress are “large as his grief, and black as his fate;” while another relates an adventure which happened one evening, “which, however, was not evening, but morning, since Aurora† smiled, and displayed white pearls in the midst of brilliant carnation”—hyperboles these, which are scarcely tolerable as the offspring of the semi-oriental imagination of a Spaniard, and clothed in his sonorous language, but surpassingly ridiculous when adopted by a Frenchman. However, they became familiar in the erotic poetry of the school at present under notice, and a large circle of fashionable critics was divided by serious disputes on the respective merits of the following sonnets by Voiture and MALLEVILLE upon *La Belle Matineuse*:—

## VOITURE.

Des portes du matin l'amante de Céphale,  
 Les roses épandoit par le milieu des airs,  
 Et jetoit dans les cieux nouvellement ouverts  
 Ces traits d'or et d'azur qu'en naissant elle étale,

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\* Born 1598, died 1648. Both Balzac and Voiture were distinguished as letter writers.

† Aurora was the assumed name of the young lady, according to a practice explained, p. 197.

Quand la nymphe divine, à mon repos fatale,  
Apparut et brilla de tant de feux divers  
Qu'il sembloit qu'elle seule esclairoit l'univers,  
Et remplissoit de feu la rive orientale.

Le soleil, se hasant pour la gloire des cieux,  
Vint opposer sa flamme à l'éclat de ses yeux,  
Et prit tous les rayons dont l'Olympe se dore ;

L'onde, la terre et l'air s'allumoient à l'entour,  
Mais auprès de Philis on le prit pour l'Aurore,  
Et l'on crut que Philis étoit l'astre du jour.

## MALLEVILLE.

Le silence régnoit sur la terre et sur l'onde ;  
L'air devenoit serein et l'Olympe vermeil,  
Et l'amoureux Zéphir, affranchi du sommeil,  
Ressuscitoit les fleurs d'une haleine féconde.

L'Aurore déployoit l'or de sa tresse blonde,  
Et semoit de rubis le chemin du soleil ;  
Enfin ce Dieu venoit au plus grand appareil  
Qu'il soit jamais venu pour éclairer le monde ;

Quand la jeune Philis, au visage riant,  
Sortant de son palais plus clair que l'Orient,  
Fit voir une lumière et plus vive et plus belle.

Sacré flambeau du jour ! n'en soyez pas jaloux ;  
Vous parûtes alors aussi peu devant elle  
Que les feux de la nuit avoient fait devant vous.

But now the ladies and gentlemen of the court were not satisfied with being amused by the professional poets : they were persuaded they could write poetry themselves. " Hereby we learn all the novelties of gallantry," says Molière, " and the pretty exchanges of prose and verse that occur from day to day. We are told, as the news of the hour, that such a one has composed the prettiest piece in the world on such a subject ; that such another has written words to such an air ;



that this person has penned a madrigal upon an enjoyment, and that one, some stanzas on an infidelity; that Mr. Such-a-one sent last night a sixain to Miss Such-a-one, and received an answer this morning; that one author has formed such a plan; that another is at the third part of his romance; while a third is putting his work through the press." "This tendency," says Guizot, "was not the fermentation produced by the presence of any one superior genius of paramount and universal influence, nor did it result from the equal and natural development of all the faculties of a free and ardent people. It was an intense but uncertain movement towards the light—an irresistible impulse to action without any determinate object."

Malherbe, and the school which he formed, fell afterwards into neglect, for fashionable caprice had turned its attention to burlesque, and every one believed himself capable of writing in this style, from the lords and ladies of the court down to the valets and maid-servants. The booksellers would publish none but burlesque poems, and there was actually printed a *Passion de Notre Seigneur en vers burlesques*—a piece "bad enough," says Pélisson, "and one whose title justly horrified those who read no more of it."

It may seem strange that an extravagant taste for burlesque should grow and flourish both in court and city side by side with the hyperbolic magnificence of Marinism. But, as Guizot has remarked, burlesque poetry, like bacchanalian, does not so usually originate among the lower classes of society, who are not familiar enough with lofty themes to know how to render them ridiculous. It was, in the first instance, the professional poets who were glad to escape from the restraints of elegant society, and to get together at the cabaret, to enjoy in excess that liberty which was not permitted elsewhere. It was such as SCARRON, a man familiar with literary study—familiar, too, from choice with the lowest society, though ad-

mitted to the highest—it was he, and such as he, that introduced a style of which the pleasantry was increased by contrast with the delicate and finical taste that had been in vogue. Had men of taste been the arbiters of literary merit, *Virgil Travestied* might have been relished as an ephemeral farce, instead of becoming a standard work. But burlesque was adopted by the court circle with all the fervor of a new fashion, which, as long as it lasts, carries all before it.

Such were the principal fashions that prevailed in light literature during the first half of the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding their diversity, we may recognise in them one general characteristic—the only one which belongs to them all; and that is, the absence of true and serious feeling, and of that inspiration which is drawn from realities. Religious enthusiasm did not inspire the numerous versifiers who then translated or paraphrased the psalms; love did not dictate one of the ten thousand sonnets, ballads, and madrigals which continually repeated its name; admiration of nature did not produce a single piece that treated of natural objects. Whatever subject was chosen for verse, it was regarded merely as a *jeu d'esprit*—an occasion for combining more or less ingeniously words which were more or less harmonious, and ideas more or less pleasing. No one dreamed of looking into himself for his true feelings or desires, his hopes or his fears; no one thought of examining the emotions of his heart, or the recollections of his life; no one, in short, aimed at being a poet; it was enough to be capable of making verses. In the productions of half a century, we find not a single piece truly elevated, energetic, or pathetic; whence we may judge what were the views entertained at this time of the nature of poetry. Truth is, it was the age of artists in language, entirely occupied with polishing the instrument they employed, and regarding the different subjects which they treated as little more than so many varieties of experiment upon its capabilities. Doubtless it owes

them something, and their labor was not wholly superfluous ; but it is to be remarked, that a language generally receives its highest improvement from those who use it only as means to an end—from men of genius who, discussing interesting subjects, and seeking to express great ideas, have almost involuntarily framed for themselves a style proportioned to the exigencies of their thoughts. It is from thought that language gains true elevation.

It is during this time—that is, between the death of Henry IV. in 1610, and that of Richelieu in 1642—that we mark the beginnings of literary societies in France. Two of these demand our notice.\*

The earliest in point of date was that of the blue-stockings, headed by Madame de Rambouillet, whose hôtel (town-house) became a seminary of female authors and factious politicians. The hostess was a lady of Italian origin, of fine taste and elegant education. She had been married at twelve years of age, and introduced to the world ; but she had turned away with disgust from the rude manners of the court of Henry IV., and devoted herself to classic studies in as much seclusion as she could easily command ; and after the death of the king, when the court presented few attractions, she gathered a distinguished circle round herself, combining the elegant intercourse of high life with the cultivation of literary tastes. Madame de Rambouillet was only five-and-thirty years of age when she was attacked with a peculiar malady, of which, we are told, the physicians of the day could neither determine the nature nor alleviate the suffering. She was, for the greater part of every year, obliged to keep her bed, yet not too ill to receive company, or too recluse in her tastes to renounce it. She therefore had an elegant alcove formed in the great salon of her house. Here her bed was placed, occasionally concealed by a screen ; and

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\* See Miss Pardoe's *Louis XIV.*

here, in the *ruelle*, as the space round the bed was called, she received intimate friends in turns; or the screen being withdrawn, she enjoyed the general company. The choicest wits of Paris flocked to her levées; the Hôtel de Rambouillet became another name for the fashionable rendezvous of literature and taste, and *bas-bleuism* was the rage. Even the infirmities of this accomplished lady were imitated: an alcove was essential to the happiness of every fashionable belle, who, attired in a coquettish *déshabille*, and reclining on satin pillows fringed with lace, gave audience to whispered gossip in the *ruelle*. Literary ladies, in those days, were *alcovists*, and the news of the club was that of the *ruelles*. The hôtel itself was deemed such a model of good taste, that Mary de Medicis commanded the architect of the Luxemburg to follow its designs.

M. de Walckenaer has given us a view of the interior on an occasion of general réunion, in the year 1644, when the society was in the height of its glory. It had met to hear a tragedy read by the great Corneille.

Among many other personages renowned in their day, but now forgotten, were Mademoiselle de Scudéry, then in the zenith of her fame; Madame de Sévigné,\* and Mademoiselle de la Vergne, afterwards Madame Lafayette, eminent as literary characters; the Duchess de Longueville, the Duchess de Chevreuse, and Madame Deshoulières, afterwards distinguished for their political activity. At the feet of these noble ladies reclined a number of young seigneurs, dangling about their little hats surcharged with plumes, while their mantles of silk and gold were spread loosely on the floor; and there, in more grave attire, were the professional *littérateurs*, such as Balzac, Voiture, Ménage, Scudéry, Chaplain, Costart, Conrart, and the Abbé Bossuet.

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\* See Madame de Sévigné and her Contemporaries, Philadelphia, Lea & Blanchard, 1842.



The hostess had so framed her invitations as to assemble all the rest of the company half an hour before the poet, that the reading might not be interrupted by entrées; but they got tired of waiting, and the Marquis de Varde proposes to fill up the time agreeably by binding the eyes of Madame de Sévigné for a game at blind-man's buff. Madame de Rambouillet implores; but the prospect of fun is so tempting, that she has to yield assent. The excitement is at the highest: Mademoiselle de la Vergne, then twelve years of age, has on the ribbon, and is standing alone in the midst of the salon, her arms outstretched, and her feet cautiously advancing, when the poet appears, attended by his brother and Benserade. The game is relinquished for the more elevated entertainment of tragic poetry. Corneille was a bad reader of his own compositions; but the young Abbé Bossuet was called upon to repeat some of the most striking passages, which he did with that oratorical power for which he was so remarkable in the pulpit. Then sundry individuals of the company recited the verses which pleased them most, and with emphasis suited to the feeling they had awakened. Thus passed a morning at the Hôtel de Rambouillet.

The Cupid of the hôtel was strictly Platonic. The romances of MADEMOISELLE DE SCUDERY were long-spun disquisitions on love, in which the passion was sublimated to an essence as pure and as cold as the atmosphere twenty miles above the height of Mont Blanc. Her map of the Land of Love, which was considered a masterpiece of *esprit*, traced the progress of a lover from the village of Petits-soins to the hamlet of Billets-doux. Before he arrives even at the outposts of Propos-galants, he must cross the three broad rivers, and gain the points of Tendre-sur-Estime, Tendre-sur-Inclination, and Tendre-sur-Reconnaissance; and so on. The characters in this lady's novels were understood to represent the living individuals by whom she was surrounded; and it not only became a high

honor to sit for this literary portrait-painter, but a kind of obligation to sustain the ideal character as it was drawn, and adopt the language as it was suggested in Mademoiselle de Scudéry's books. Hence a world of affectation; and one folly leading to another in this pursuit of refinement, the vocabulary of the salon became at length so artificial, that none but the initiated could understand it.\*

As for Mademoiselle de Scudéry herself, though she was not without eligible enough suitors, yet applying, as it would seem in her own case, the impracticable tests she had invented for sounding the depth and sincerity of the tender passion, she died an old maid at the advanced age of ninety-four.

The first and second of her interminable romances were published under her brother's name; but the fame they acquired drew too much attention upon the reputed author to admit of his strutting long in borrowed plumage. As soon as the real author was known, her popularity became unbounded. She opened her own salon as a literary lady, and on Saturdays received the company of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, but without occasioning the least jealousy in its accomplished mistress.

The civil wars of the Fronde, which broke out in 1649, and were not wholly over before 1654, were unfavorable to literary meetings; but it is to be remarked, that the women who took the most distinguished part in these troubles, had graduated, if we may so speak, in the college of Rambouillet. Also, when the extravagant but magnificent Fouquet, in whose

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\* Perhaps no one has carried this style to a more ridiculous excess than Cyrano de Bergerac. Describing the aqueduct of Arcueil, he says that the water in it "est si délicate, qu'elle passe par-dessus les ponts, de peur de se mouiller; qu'elle monte sur des échasses pour voir de plus loin; que, pour s'être vue cajoler au village, elle devient si glorieuse, qu'elle ne veut plus marcher, si on ne la porte; qu'elle est un pâté de poisson, qui a trop de sauce; un arc-en-ciel solide, une naïade au lit, qui reçoit un clystère; le trou par où elle s'échappe de son chenal est un oeil de terre, qui pleure."

hands were the finances of the kingdom, was thrown into the Bastille as a public defaulter, the ladies Scudéry, Sévigné, and Lafayette, remained his unfailing friends. It was perhaps for these reasons that the Hôtel de Rambouillet declined with the ascendancy of Louis Quatorze. The agitations of the Fronde had taught him to distrust clever women; and he always showed a marked dislike for female authorship. The comedies of Molière, as we shall see, gave the finishing stroke to the pedantry, at least, of the *bas-bleus*.

The taste for literature which had become so generally diffused, rendered the men whose province it was to define its laws the chiefs of a brilliant empire, and grammar became an object of primary importance. Men of letters, therefore, frequently met together for the discussion of critical points of language; and the literary meetings which multiplied in every direction were chiefly occupied with discussing the difficulties of grammar, and expressing opinions upon new works. About the year 1629, Chapelain, Gombaud, Godeau, Malleville, and some others, agreed to assemble on a certain day in each week at the house of Conrart, which was most conveniently situated for them all. It was not exclusively a literary meeting, for it appears they conversed familiarly on matters of business and public interest, as well as those of literature; and confidentially sought and received advice with respect to the works in which they were engaged. It was a union of friendship, a companionship of men of kindred tastes and similar occupations; and to prevent the intrusion of unwelcome visitors, the meeting was kept secret, and continued so for nearly four years. As soon as it was divulged, one and another solicited admission, and Richelieu came to hear of the existence of the society. This eminent minister partook of the fashionable taste for mental amusements, but at the same time rendered them subservient to his political glory. He patronized literature both as a minister and an amateur, the taste of the ama-

teur being supported by the authority of the minister. Again and again he desired to know whether these gentlemen would not like to form themselves into a corporation established by letters-patent, and thus to meet under public authority; but nothing could have been less agreeable to them than such an honor. It was then hinted that, as by the laws of the realm no meetings might be held without royal permission, the cardinal could put a stop to theirs if he were so disposed. This argument was irresistible; and the little society consented to receive from his highness the title of the FRENCH ACADEMY\* (1635), and letters-patent, which were registered by the parliament on condition that the members of the said academy shall occupy themselves in establishing certain rules for the French language, and rendering it not only elegant, but capable of treating all matters of art and science. It was also to take cognisance of whatever books were written by its members, or by others who desired its opinions.

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## VIII.—PHILOSOPHY.

### DESCARTES—PASCAL.

DURING this very period, in a region far above that of court favor, and in a kind of exile which appears to have torn him from France only to give him to Europe, DESCARTES† elaborated a system of philosophy in creating a method of philosophizing. He was born at La Haye, in Touraine (1596), of a noble family, and educated by the Jesuits at the college of La

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\* A good outline of its history may be found in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Art. *Academy*.

† A sketch of his life is given in Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopedia*, in the volume on Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France.



Flèche, where he was early distinguished by a passionate devotion to study. As soon as he left college, his first care, as he himself records, was to renounce all his books, and to endeavor to divest his mind of all the uncertain theories with which it had been furnished, and henceforth to admit into it nothing but what was demonstrable. Unless we could transport ourselves back to the age of Descartes, in which every mind was imbued with the ancient scholastic philosophy, and no other was known, or at least recognised as orthodox, we can scarcely form any adequate idea of the effort it demanded to begin, like Descartes, to take nothing upon trust. But at nineteen years of age it was too early to elaborate a system, much more to propound his thoughts to the world. In conformity with the fashion of his rank, and in order to gain a more extensive acquaintance with men and things, he embraced the profession of arms, which led him into Holland, Germany, and Hungary; after which, renouncing the military life, he continued to travel as a private individual, and at thirty-three years of age retired into Holland, in order to devote himself entirely to study without fear of distraction. Here he composed and published his principal works, from which he reaped immense renown, though he at the same time encountered a fearful storm of persecution. The leading peculiarity of his metaphysical system was the attempt to deduce all moral and religious truth from self-consciousness: "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore, I am) was the famous axiom on which the whole was built. From this he was led to infer the existence of two distinct natures in man—the mental and the physical; and having traced with a firm hand the line of demarcation between mind and matter, he proceeded to infer the existence of certain ideas, which he called innate in the mind, underived from the outward world, and serving to connect it with the spiritual and invisible. Among these, he said, was the notion of infinity; and hence he concluded the knowledge of Deity

to be implanted in man's very nature. Besides these new views in metaphysics, Descartes made valuable contributions to mathematical and physical science; and though his philosophy is now generally discarded even in his own country, yet it is not forgotten that he opened the way for Locke, Newton, and Leibnitz, and that his system, which continued dominant in France till the time of Condillac, was in reality the base of all those which have superseded it. There is scarcely a name on record the bearer of which has given a greater impulse to mathematical and philosophical inquiry than Descartes; and what is more to our present purpose, he embodied his most important lucubrations—his *Discours sur la Méthode*, for instance—in the vernacular language, which he used in so masterly a way that it has justly been said his fame as a writer would have been greater if his celebrity as a thinker had been less.

Finding himself exposed to persecution on account of his novel principles, he accepted the invitation of the king of Sweden to repair to Stockholm (1649), where, however, his naturally delicate constitution sunk under the rigor of the climate in the fifty-fourth year of his age (1650). He was buried at St. Génévieve, but no funeral oration was allowed over his remains.

It is worth remarking here, that Malherbe, the severe reformer of French poetry, died (1628) two years after Lord Bacon, the English reformer of science, and about the same time that Descartes was preparing a similar revolution in France. It was the peculiar mission of these two great men to dethrone the *ipse dixit* of the schoolmen, and establish in mental and natural philosophy that great principle of free examination which Luther had already enforced in theology. But it must be mentioned, as detracting much from the merit and usefulness of Descartes, that the vivacity and dogmatism of his temper led him to behave superciliously towards the

greatest men among his contemporaries, while his jealousy prevented him from entering into friendly intercourse with Galileo, or encouraging the rising genius of Pascal.

In a letter which Mersenne addressed to Descartes, dated November 12, 1639, he mentions a young man sixteen years of age, who had composed a treatise on conic sections, and who gave promise of eclipsing all the mathematicians of the day. Descartes received the intelligence coldly, and without any appearance of interest. Eight years afterwards, the youthful and the matured philosopher were personally introduced; they conversed on their experiments on the vacuum, on the weight of the air, and what Descartes had called the subtile matter. This young man, whose precocious intellect and early attainments almost displeased Descartes, was BLAISE PASCAL.\*

This amazing genius was born in the province of Auvergne, in 1623. At the death of his mother, which happened when he was three years of age, his father determined to devote himself entirely to the education of this his only son and two daughters; and for this purpose disposed of a public appointment which he held at Clermont, and removed to Paris. It was an interesting era in the annals of the human mind. The darkness of scholastic philosophy was gradually clearing away before the light which an improved method of study was shedding over the natural sciences. A system of philosophy founded on observation was preparing the downfall of those traditional errors which had long held the mastery in the schools. Geometricians, physicians, and astronomers taught by their example the severe process of reasoning which was to regenerate all the sciences; and minds of the first order, scattered in various parts of Europe, communicated to each other the results of their labors, and stimulated each other to new

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\* See Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopedia.

exertion. The elder Pascal, himself a man of considerable attainments, and connected with the best informed men in Paris, took an active part in those conferences which proved the cradle of the Royal Academy of Science, and in the correspondence which was maintained with foreign savans. His own tastes were mathematical, but he did not intend to initiate his son in the exact sciences till after his memory and imagination had been duly cultivated by literary studies. The boy, however, by the force of his own unaided intellect, dived deep into mathematical science, and at twelve years of age had made such singular progress, that his father allowed him to follow the bent of his genius. At sixteen, he produced a treatise on conic sections, which was followed at short intervals by several important discoveries in arithmetic and geometry. In 1647, his experiments on the vacuum and the pressure of the atmosphere completed the researches of Torricelli; and in 1653, he put the top-stone on his scientific labors by his treatise on the equilibrium of fluids, and his observations on the mechanical powers. Thus far he was known to the public only as one of the most eminent geometricians of modern times. But about this time he formed the design of abandoning science for pursuits exclusively religious; and circumstances arose which became the occasion of those *Lettres Provinciales*, which, with the *Pensées de la Religion*, are considered among the finest specimens of French literature.

The abbey of Port Royal aux Champs\* occupied a lonely situation about six leagues from Paris. A short time before that of which we now speak, its internal discipline had undergone a thorough reformation under the pious care of Angelica Arnaud, the daughter of a noble of Auvergne; and the abbey rose to such high reputation, that several men of eminent

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\* For a Sketch of the Port Royalists see James Stephen's Essay, also Quarterly Review, October, 1856.



piety and learning, among the rest two brothers of the abbess Angelica, were attracted to the spot, and took up their abode in one of the private houses that pertain to the establishment, there to enjoy literary leisure and religious privileges. Besides works strictly devotional, they compiled books of secular instruction, known under the title of *Les Méthodes de Port Royal*, some of which, as the Logic and Grammar, gained a lasting and extensive reputation. They likewise received pupils, and their system of education became celebrated, both in a religious and an intellectual point of view. Their great rivals were the Jesuits, who at that time enjoyed almost a monopoly in the work of classical education, having colleges for this purpose in most of the larger towns. Pascal, though not himself a member of the Port Royal establishment, was a frequent visitor, and united in the bonds of friendship with its gifted recluses, whose severe principles and serious conversation accorded well with his own predilections. Antoine Arnaud having been drawn into a controversy with the Sorbonne on the doctrines of the Jansenists,\* had recourse to the aid of Pascal, who, as if by inspiration, adopted a mode of reply at once novel and happy. He published at short intervals a series of letters, purporting to be from one Louis de Montalte to a provincial friend; and giving these letters a dramatic form, he brought his adversaries on the stage with himself, and fairly cut them up for the public amusement. This exposure of the doctrines and policy of the Jesuits is allowed on all hands to combine the comic pleasantry of Molière with the

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\* The Jansenists corresponded to the ultra-Calvinists of Protestantism, contending for the necessity of a peculiar inward vocation, or effectual call, in order to repentance and salvation. They were so called from Jansen, bishop of Yprès, in whose works the five points were said to be embodied. The doctrine of their opponents—that every man receives grace sufficient to choose between sin and holiness—was called Molinist, after Molina, a Jesuit who wrote on the subject.

vehement eloquence of Demosthenes. The style, so clear and popular that a child might understand it, and at the same time so elegant and attractive, gained immediate attention. But notwithstanding the sensation thus produced in favor of the Port Royalists, and the still more astounding effect of a miraculous cure declared to have been wrought at the convent, which for a time silenced their adversaries, the Jesuits renewed their efforts; induced the parliament of Provence to condemn the Letters to be burned by the common hangman; and the Port Royalists, refusing to sign a formula condemnatory of their famous doctrines, were driven from their retreat, and the establishment broken up. Jaqueline Pascal\* died of grief for this misfortune; and Blaise Pascal's forcible repression of his natural feelings on the occasion, too truly indicated the unnatural discipline to which he had subjugated himself.

The work which is considered Pascal's master-piece, is his *Pensées de la Religion*. It consists of fragments of thought, appearing as if thrown together at hap-hazard on the paper without apparent connexion or unity of design; scattered materials, requiring that arrangement which could have been supplied only by the hand of the writer. It has been often lamented that he never constructed the edifice which it is believed he had designed, and of which these Thoughts were the splendid materials in course of collection. Several of his editors have endeavored to reduce them to order and classification; but it is doubtful whether they have discovered anything like the sequence which was in the author's mind. Some of his admirers think they can trace the outline of a complete system of religious philosophy, unfolding the nature and destinies of man, defining the limits of his moral and physical powers, exposing his weakness and poverty, but displaying, at the same time, the remains of his fallen greatness, and its pros-

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\* See Life of Jaqueline Pascal, New York, 1854.

pects of restoration through the principles and powers revealed in the Christian religion. These Thoughts, however, are in some places obscure ; there are frequent repetitions, and even glaring contradictions, concerning which the admirers of Pascal say, that the obscurities and repetitions are necessarily incident to a collection of detached notes, which must not be judged by the ordinary rules of literary composition ; while the contradictory passages are accounted for by supposing them to be notes of objections which the author intended to answer. On the other hand, the enemies of Pascal say, that during the few last years of his life his mind was decidedly unsound, and veered most painfully between philosophic doubt and religious belief ; sometimes hopelessly sceptical, sometimes superstitiously credulous. It is known that from his eighteenth year, he was a great sufferer ; that his mental labors, which he could not be prevailed upon to relax, were too much for his delicate frame ; and that, after an accident by which his carriage was nearly overturned into the Seine, he was subject to severe headaches, and a sensation as though he were falling over a precipice. From the time of this occurrence, which took place in his thirty-fifth year, he believed his days were numbered, and devoted himself with assiduity, and after a fashion not deemed superstitious in that age, to prepare for another world. His self-inflicted tortures probably hastened his death, which took place in 1662, shortly after he had completed his thirty-ninth year. A posthumous examination of his body displayed the liver and intestines dried up, and the brain almost of a solid consistence.

After being obliged to advert to so much that is frivolous and profane in French literature, it is quite refreshing to meet an author like Pascal ; and we gladly present a specimen of his *Thoughts* :—

DE JÉSUS-CHRIST.

La distance infinie des corps aux esprits figure la distance infiniment plus infinie des esprits à la charité ; car elle est surnaturelle.

Tout l'éclat des grandeurs n'a point de lustre pour les gens qui sont dans les recherches de l'esprit. La grandeur des gens d'esprit est invisible aux riches, aux rois, aux conquérants et à tous ces grands de chair. La grandeur de la sagesse qui vient de Dieu est invisible aux charnels et aux gens d'esprit. Ce sont trois ordres de différents genres.

Les grands génies ont leur empire, leur éclat, leur grandeur, leurs victoires, et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles, qui n'ont nul rapport avec celles qu'ils cherchent. Ils sont vus des esprits, non des yeux ; mais c'est assez. Les saints ont leur empire, leur éclat, leurs grandeurs, leurs victoires, et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles ou spirituelles, qui ne sont pas de leur ordre, et qui n'ajoutent ni n'ôtent à la grandeur qu'ils désirent. Ils sont vus de Dieu et des anges, et non des corps ni des esprits curieux : Dieu leur suffit.

Archimède, sans aucun éclat de naissance, serait en même vénération. Il n'a pas donné des batailles, mais il a laissé à tout l'univers des inventions admirables. Oh ! qu'il est grand et éclatant aux yeux de l'esprit ! Jésus-Christ, sans bien et sans aucune production de science au dehors, est dans son ordre de sainteté. Il n'a point donné d'inventions, il n'a point régné ; mais il est humble, patient, saint devant Dieu, terrible aux démons, sans aucun péché. Oh ! qu'il est venu en grande pompe et en une prodigieuse magnificence aux yeux du cœur, et qui voient la sagesse !

Il eût été inutile à Archimède de faire le prince dans ses livres de géométrie, quoiqu'il le fût. Il eût été inutile à notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, pour éclater dans son règne de sainteté, de venir en roi. Mais qu'il est bien venu avec l'éclat de son ordre !

Il est ridicule de se scandaliser de la bassesse de Jésus-Christ, comme si cette bassesse était du même ordre que la grandeur qu'il venait faire paraître. Qu'on considère cette grandeur-là dans sa vie, dans sa passion, dans son obscurité, dans sa mort, dans l'élection des siens, dans leur fuite, dans sa secrète résurrection, et dans le reste ; on la verra si grande, qu'on n'aura pas sujet de se scandaliser d'une bassesse qui n'y est pas. Mais il y en a qui ne peuvent admirer que les grandeurs charnelles, comme s'il n'y en avait pas de spirituelles, et d'autres qui n'admirent, que les spirituelles, comme s'il n'y en avait pas d'infiniment plus hautes dans la sagesse.

Tous les corps, le firmament, les étoiles, la terre, et les royaumes,



ne valent pas le moindre des esprits; car il connaît tout cela, et soi-même; et le corps, rien. Et tous les corps et tous les esprits ensemble, et toutes leurs productions, ne valent pas le moindre mouvement de charité; car elle est d'un ordre infiniment plus élevé.

De tous les corps ensemble on ne saurait tirer la moindre pensée: cela est impossible et d'un autre ordre. Tous les corps et les esprits ensemble ne sauraient produire un mouvement de vraie charité: cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre tout surnaturel.

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## IX.—THE DRAMA.

### CORNEILLE.

THE same year in which the French Academy received its mission to watch over the purity of the language, and in which Descartes published his *Discours sur la Méthode*, a new era in the drama was ushered in by CORNEILLE,\* the father of French tragedy.

Corneille was, it has been remarked, a man greater in himself than even in his works, conceiving ideas more sublime than he executed; possessing a mighty genius, but restrained from achieving all that he was capable of, being fettered by the rules of the French drama, and the conventional state of French verse. We know little of his personal history; a sort of shadowy indistinctness hangs over the course of his life, and only here and there we catch a glimpse of his career. His father was master of waters and forests in the viscounty of Rouen, where the poet was born in 1606. The lad was destined for the legal profession, and trained in the severe studies which were necessary to prepare him for it; but the dictates of his genius early prompted him to a different voca-

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\* See Life of Corneille by Guizot; also Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia, Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France.

tion, and the tastes of the age were calculated to stimulate and encourage him. The day of the *Mysteries* and the *Moralities* was past; the comedies of Hardy, the court poet of Henry IV., had been in turn consigned to oblivion; Richelieu's, though revised and patched up by the best authors in Paris, were contemptible, yet the taste for the drama spread and prevail. It is said that a friend of Corneille's, who loved but without return, introduced the poet to the lady, and begged him to write a sonnet in his name to propitiate the cruel fair. She was propitiated, indeed, but it was towards the poet, not the lover; and the adventure formed the groundwork of *Mélite*, the first comedy of Corneille. "This," he says, "was my *coup d'essai*. It is not in the rules, for I did not know of their existence; common-sense was my only guide, with the example of Hardy. The success of my piece was wonderful; it caused the formation of a new company of players in Paris; and being equal to the best which had as yet appeared, it brought me under the notice of the court." *Mélite* was followed by several other pieces, which, though now considered unreadable, were better than anything then known; and Corneille had the honor of being appointed one of the five authors who filled up the plays sketched by Richelieu. Having ventured, however, to make some alteration which the cardinal disapproved, he was informed that it was necessary to have *un esprit de suite*; whereupon he abjured his subaltern employment, and found a pretext for returning to Rouen. Here he continued to write, stimulated, as he himself intimates, by the secret admiration of the lady whose love, we are told, was the dominant passion of his life.

J'ai brulé fort longtemps d'une amour assez grande,  
Et que jusqu'au tombeau je dois bien estimer,  
Puisque ce fut par-là que j'appris à rimer.  
Mon bonheur commença quand mon ame fut prise,  
Je gagnai de la gloire en perdant ma franchise.

Charmé de deux beaux yeux, mon vers charma la cour ;  
Et ce que j'ai de nom je le dois à l'amour.  
J'adorai donc Phylis, et la secrète estime  
Que ce divin esprit faisait de notre rime  
Me fit devenir poëte aussitôt qu'amoureux :  
Elle eut mes premiers vers, elle eut mes premiers feux,  
Et bien que maintenant cette belle inhumaine  
Traite mon souvenir avec un peu de haine,  
Je me trouve toujours en état de l'aimer ;  
Je me sens tout ému quand je l'entends nommer,  
Et par le doux effet d'une prompte tendresse,  
Mon cœur, sans mon aveu, reconnaît sa maîtresse.  
Après beaucoup de vœux et de soumissions  
Un malheur rompt le cours de nos affections ;  
Mais tout mon amour en elle consommée,  
Je ne vois rien d'aimable après l'avoir aimée ;  
Aussi n'aimé-je plus, et nul objet vainqueur  
N'a possédé depuis ma veine ni mon cœur.

An attempt at tragedy on a classical theme having met with little success, Corneille persevered in comedy, till a new field opened to his view. The Spanish drama having arisen, not among the learned, but the people, had been essentially popular from its commencement. Here was no attempt to exhibit the heroes of classic antiquity speaking modern languages and expressing modern feelings. The Spanish poets depicted men such as they knew, narrated events such as they had witnessed, and embodied passions such as they had felt. Chalons, the Italian secretary of Marie de Medici, retiring to Rouen in his declining years, and meeting with Corneille, advised him to abandon comedy, and turn his attention to the Spanish language, in which he would find subjects suited to his genius. The result was the production of the *Cid*, which is allowed to constitute an era in the dramatic history of France (1635). In this work, Corneille followed pretty closely in the steps of Guilhen de Castro, who had constructed a drama on the foundation of the old Spanish romances which narrate the

history of this famous hero. Only he rejected certain puerilities, which, however venerable in Spain, would have excited ridicule in France.

Rodrigo, afterwards called the Cid, son of the venerable Don Diego, is attached to Ximena,\* the daughter of Gomez, Count of Gormas, with the approval of the parents on both sides. But ere the arrival of the nuptial-day, Diego informs his son that he has received an insult from a powerful warrior, and his own feeble arm being unable to sway the sword, he commits the vengeance to him. Rodrigo is shocked and staggered to learn that the offender is no other than the father of his betrothed. But Diego will listen to no objection :

Ne réplique point, je connois ton amour ;  
 Mais qui peut vivre infâme est indigne du jour ;  
 Plus l'offenseur est cher, et plus grande est l'offense :  
 Enfin tu sais l'affront, et tu tiens la vengeance.  
 Je ne te dis plus rien ; venge-moi, venge-toi ;  
 Montre-toi digne fils d'un père tel que moi :  
 Accablé des malheurs où le destin me range,  
 Je m'en vais les pleurer. Va, cours, vole, et nous venge.

The dutiful son, accordingly, challenges and slays the count, who has refused even the king's desire that he should humble himself and seek reconciliation. Ximena hastens into the royal presence, and demands vengeance on her lover for the death of her father, while Diego pleads for his son, as having done what was right, while he offers to die in his stead, if need be :

Sire, ainsi ces cheveux blanchis sous le harnois,  
 Ce sang pour vous servir prodigué tant de fois,  
 Ce bras, jadis l'effroi d'une armée ennemie,  
 Descendoient au tombeau tous chargés d'infamie,  
 Si je n'eusse produit un fils digne de moi,  
 Digne de son pays, et digne de son roi.

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\* Chimène, according to French orthography.



Il m'a prêté sa main, il a tué le comte,  
 Il m'a rendu l'honneur, il a lavé ma honte.  
 Si montrer du courage et du ressentiment,  
 Si venger un soufflet mérite un châtiment,  
 Sur moi seul doit tomber l'éclat de la tempête :  
 Quand le bras a failli, l'on en punit la tête.  
 Qu'on nomme crime, ou nou, ce qui fait nos débats,  
 Sire, j'en suis la tête, il n'en est que le bras.  
 Si Chimène se plaint qu'il a tué son père,  
 Il ne l'eût jamais fait, si je l'eusse pu faire.  
 Immolez donc ce chef que les ans vont ravir,  
 Et conservez pour vous le bras qui peut servir ;  
 Aux dépens de mon sang satisfaites Chimène,  
 Je n'y résiste point, je consens à ma peine ;  
 Et, loin de murmurer d'un rigoureux décret,  
 Mourant sans déshonneur, je mourrai sans regret.

Meanwhile, Rodrigo has sought the dwelling of Ximena, and, on her return, presents her with the sword still stained with her father's blood, and implores her to take her own vengeance with it :

*Chimène.* Ote-moi cet objet odieux,  
 Qui reproche ton crime et ta vie à mes yeux.

*Don Rodrigue.* Regarde-le plutôt pour exciter ta haine,  
 Pour croître ta colère, et pour hâter ma peine.

*Chim.* Il est teint de mon sang.

*D. Rod.* Plonge-le dans le mien,  
 Et fais-lui perdre ainsi la teinture du tien.

She refuses, and mutual explanations follow, in which she admits that she loves him still, and does not blame him for avenging his father's honor ; but that a similar feeling on her own part stimulates and obliges her to seek vengeance upon him :

*D. Rod.* Rigoureux point d'honneur ! Hélas ! quoi que je fasse,  
 Ne pourrai-je à la fin obtenir cette grace ?  
 Au nom d'un père mort, ou de notre amitié,  
 Punis-moi par vengeance, ou du moins par pitié ;

Ton malheureux amant aura bien moins de peine  
A mourir par ta main, qu'à vivre avec ta haine.

*Chim.* Va, je ne te haïs point.

*D. Rod.* Tu le dois.

*Chim.* Je ne puis.

Again she says :

Malgré des feux si beaux qui troublent ma colère  
Je ferai mon possible à bien venger mon père ;  
Mais, malgré la rigueur d'un si cruel devoir,  
Mon unique souhait est de ne rien pouvoir.

*D. Rod.* O miracle d'amour !

*Chim.* O comble de misères !

*D. Rod.* Que de maux et de pleurs nous coûterent nos pères !

*Chim.* Rodrigue, qui l'eût cru ! . . .

*D. Rod.* Chimène, qui l'eût dit ! . . .

*Chim.* Que notre heur fût si proche, et sitôt se perdit ! . . .

*D. Rod.* Et que, si près du port, contre toute apparence,  
Un orage si prompt brisât notre espérance !

*Chim.* Ah, mortelles douleurs !

*D. Rod.* Ah, regrets superflus !

And with such sentiments they part.

Don Diego now meeting his son, applauds his valor :

Ne mêle point de soupirs à ma joie ;  
Laisse-moi prendre haleine, afin de te louer.  
Ma valeur n'a point lieu de te désavouer,  
Tu l'as bien imitée ; et ton illustre audace  
Fait bien revivre en toi les héros de ma race.  
C'est d'eux que tu descends, c'est de moi que tu viens.  
Ton premier coup d'épée égale tous les miens ;  
Et d'une belle ardeur ta jeunesse animée  
Par cette grande épreuve atteint ma renommée.  
Appui de ma vieillesse, et comble de mon heur,  
Touche ces cheveux blancs à qui tu rends l'honneur ;  
Viens baiser cette joue, et reconnois la place  
Où fut empreint l'affront que ton courage efface.

He would induce him also to renounce his attachment to

Ximena ; but Rodrigo pleads that honor binds him to her as much as it bound him to fight with her father :

Mon honneur offensé sur moi-même se venge,  
Et vous m'osez pousser à la honte du change !  
L'infamie est pareille, et suit également  
Le guerrier sans courage, et le perfide amant.  
A ma fidélité ne faites point d'injure,  
Souffrez-moi généreux sans me rendre parjure :  
Mes liens sont trop forts pour être ainsi rompus ;  
Ma foi m'engage encor si je n'espère plus ;  
Et, ne pouvant quitter ni posséder Chimène,  
Le trépas que je cherche est ma plus douce peine.

The father answers, that an opportunity now occurs for atoning for the blood he has spilt, and proving to the king that he may find in him a worthy successor of the count. Five hundred of his friends had assembled, and offered their services to avenge his wrong ; and just at this juncture, the Moors have made a sudden descent upon the city. "Go," says he to his son, "march at their head against these enemies of Spain." Rodrigo obeys, performs prodigies of valor, brings home two royal prisoners, and obtains leave to enter the king's presence, and give an account of the battle. This he does in a truly graphic manner ; and the passage is much admired : the following is a part of it :—

Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles  
Enfin avec le flux nous fait voir trente voiles ;  
L'onde s'enfle dessous, et d'un commun effort  
Les Maures et la mer montent jusques au port.  
On les laisse passer ; tout leur paroît tranquille ;  
Point de soldats au port, point aux murs de la ville.  
Notre profond silence abusant leurs esprits,  
Ils n'osent plus douter de nous avoir surpris ;  
Ils abordent sans peur, ils ancrent, ils descendent,  
Et courent se livrer aux mains qui les attendent.  
Nous nous levons alors, et tous en même temps  
Poussons jusques au ciel mille cris éclatants.

But now Ximena demands an audience; and Rodrigo is dismissed, while she enters, and anew requires the promised justice. The king, for a moment, deceives her into the idea that Rodrigo has fallen in the conflict:

*D. Ferd.* Enfin, soyez contente,  
Chimène ; le succès répond à votre attente.  
Si de nos ennemis Rodrigue a le dessus,  
Il est mort à nos yeux des coups qu'il a reçus ;  
Rendez grâces au ciel qui vous en a vengée.

And now, having observed the deadly pallor which the intelligence has spread over her cheek, he corrects the impression, and pleads for her lover. She pretends that her momentary grief was for the loss of the expected vengeance—was to hear that Rodrigo had fallen gloriously in the field, instead of ignominiously on the scaffold; and when the king persists in pleading the case with her, she demands that it may be proclaimed among the cavaliers, that she desires a champion to meet her adversary, and her hand shall be his reward if he slays him. The king disapproves of renewing these barbarous old customs, confesses his desire to spare Rodrigo, believes that the flying Moors have borne his crime along with them, and objects to make him a butt for a host of warriors. However, he allows her to select one champion, under promise of bestowing her hand on whoever proves the victor:

Choisis qui tu voudras, Chimène, et choisis bien :  
Mais après ce combat ne demande plus rien.

Sancho offers himself, and is accepted. In the interim, Rodrigo seeks Ximena, and assures her that he will not attempt to defend himself against the hand which she has chosen to slay him:

Maintenant qu'il s'agit de mon seul intérêt,  
Vous demandez ma mort, j'en accepte l'arrêt ;



Votre ressentiment choisit la main d'un autre,  
 Je ne méritois pas de mourir de la vôtre :  
 On ne me verra point en repousser les coups ;  
 Je dois plus de respect à qui combat pour vous ;  
 Et, ravi de penser que c'est de vous qu'ils viennent,  
 Puisque c'est votre honneur que ses armes soutiennent,  
 Je vais lui présenter mon estomac ouvert,  
 Adorant en sa main la vôtre qui me perd.

She would fain persuade him otherwise ; and when all other arguments fail, she begs him to fight manfully, were it only to deliver her from the necessity of marrying a man she hates. Rodrigo completely defeats his adversary, but spares his life ; and the king insists that the lady shall give her hand to the man she loves :

Ma fille, il ne faut point rougir d'un si beau feu,  
 Ni chercher les moyens d'en faire un désaveu ;  
 Une louable honte en vain t'en sollicite ;  
 Ta gloire est dégagée, et ton devoir est quitte ;  
 Ton père est satisfait ; et c'étoit le venger  
 Que mettre tant de fois ton Rodrigue en danger.  
 Tu vois comme le ciel autrement en dispose ;  
 Ayant tant fait pour lui, fais pour toi quelque chose,  
 Et ne sois point rebelle à mon commandement,  
 Qui te donne un époux aimé si chèrement.

It were easy to point out serious defects in this much-lauded work ; the senseless notion of unity of time crowding into twenty-four hours events which could be probable and natural only after a lapse of years ; the anachronism of placing the scene in Seville, which was not in the possession of the Spanish people till long after the time of the Cid ; with other faults resulting from adherence to what the countrymen of Corneille had laid down as indispensable rules of the drama. But, on the other hand, it was the first time that the depths of passion had been stirred on the stage ; that love and duty, tenderness and magnanimity, had been exhibited in direful conflict and

with tragic effect. The success was unprecedented. It was received with enthusiasm in Paris, and all France resounded with its praise, till a sort of epidemic transport pervaded the country. Nothing else was talked of; the people were never tired of seeing it; every one knew some part of it by heart; and it became usual to praise any person or thing by calling them *Beau comme le Cid*.

Such high renown proved, of course, a signal for envy and detraction. A fierce controversy ensued; and Richelieu, secretly desirous of humbling a man whose triumph he considered as rebellion against himself, desired that the merits of the *Cid* should be referred to the French Academy. In vain did this body allege its well-grounded fear of making its young existence odious by exercising a power which it did not rightfully possess: the cardinal said their arguments appeared to him to have very little weight. The Academy urged that, according to their statutes, they could not sit in judgment on any work without the author's concurrence; and the cardinal employed Bois-Robert to remove this obstacle. In vain were all the efforts of a court friendship enlisted in the cause; Corneille maintained a most complimentary and deferential tone, and with polite formalities evaded a direct refusal. When at length it was clearly announced as the desire of a minister with whom to desire was to command, Corneille was induced to reply: "The gentlemen of the Academy may do as they please; as you write that monseigneur would like to have their opinion, and that it would divert his highness, I have nothing more to say." The Academy would still have held back, and authority had to use its last resource. "Tell those gentlemen that I desire it, and that I shall love them as they love me," said the minister; and the Academy, like Corneille, "had nothing more to say."

Again and again was the report of this body laid before his highness and objected to; and not till after five months' labor to frame such a judgment as should satisfy him without insult-

ing the public, were these gentlemen relieved and their report given to the world. The task forced upon them had been a singularly difficult as well as invidious one. There had as yet been no models, and consequently no rules, by which the intrinsic merits of such a work could be tried; the only tests which were or could be applied were those of verbal criticism, with some derived from the ancient classics. While pointing out several defects, accordingly, the judges added, that "even learned men must extend some indulgence to the irregularities of a work which would not have had the good fortune to please the public so much if it had not possessed uncommon beauties; and that the naturalness and vehemence of its passions, the energy and delicacy of many of its thoughts, and a certain indescribable charm which mingles with all its defects, have obtained for it a high rank among French poems of the same nature."

To complete the absurdity of this affair, Scudéry, the great adversary of Corneille in this matter, returned thanks to the Academy for what he considered a triumph, while the poet complained bitterly of the treatment he had received. These were not the days of high and independent feeling, however; and notwithstanding the literary jealousy that existed between the minister and the dramatist, we find patronage graciously extended by the one, and humbly accepted by the other. Fontenelle, the nephew of Corneille, relates that the cardinal, on one occasion, observing Corneille to be more thoughtful than usual, asked whether he had any composition on hand; to which the poet replied, that he was in no state for literary labor, his head being turned by a tender attachment. Coming to particulars, he informed his highness that he was passionately fond of a daughter of the lieutenant-general of Andely, who refused to give her in marriage. Richelieu at once despatched a peremptory summons to the father, who forthwith repaired to Paris in the utmost alarm, and was relieved to find that no

worse fate awaited him than that of being obliged to surrender his daughter to Corneille.

It was natural, however, for the poet to remember what the minister had forgotten, and Corneille found it difficult to believe in the sincerity of a reconciliation on the other side which was not complete on his own. He continued to go forward relying on his own powers, and confident of his own resources, firmly awaiting the renewed attacks of envy and malignity. None, however, appeared; at least no cry has reached us but that of universal admiration. For years his pieces followed each other in rapid succession without opposition, and almost without interruption, enjoying such a monopoly that the history of the stage was that of Corneille's works. Meanwhile the author had retired to Rouen, withdrawing into that personal obscurity which was congenial to the simplicity of his manners, and his life can be traced only in his works. The *Cid* had given occasion for scandal by the triumph of love which it exhibited—a triumph long resisted, however, and at last but imperfectly achieved; in *Les Horaces* love was represented as punished for its rebellion against the laws of honor; in *Cinna*, as though in expiation of Chimène's weakness, all more tender considerations are sacrificed to the implacable duty of avenging a father; while in *Polyeucte*, duty triumphs alone, and the sacrifices of the leading characters do not cost them a single virtue. And now Corneille would try comedy again, borrowing, as in tragedy, from the Spanish. *Le Menteur* was the result; but tragedy resumed possession of his genius. "It is impossible," says Guizot, "to imagine what that genius would have become, or to divine either the extraordinary beauties which it might have unfolded, or the vagaries of which it might have been guilty, if he had boldly abandoned himself to its guidance. But Corneille feared criticism, though he defied it; he was angry at being obliged to fight his way, and therefore withdrew from the path in which he was likely



to meet with enemies—a prudence which perhaps saved him from some dangerous quicksands, but undoubtedly hindered him from some valuable discoveries.” *Pertharite* was the first of his pieces which appeared a failure, and was met with severe criticism. Thenceforth his decline was as rapid as his success had been brilliant. “The fall of the great Corneille,” says Fontenelle, “may be reckoned among the most remarkable examples of the vicissitudes of human affairs; even Belisarius asking alms is not more striking.” To the poet himself, it came as an unexpected blow; and the bitterness it produced appears in his preface to *Pertharite*. “It is just,” he says, “that after twenty years of labor, I should be made conscious of growing too old to continue in vogue.” Being determined to take leave of the public before they entirely took leave of him, he spent six years in entire seclusion, during which he composed a metrical version of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, as well as three discourses on dramatic poetry, and some criticisms upon his own works. Again he was induced, in 1659, to revert to tragedy, and *Œdipe*, with some other pieces, appeared. As his years increased, he became apparently more and more anxious for popularity, the grief of his failures having made him forget his earlier successes. The following lines, in which he implores the favor of Louis XIV. for his last works, depict his feeling of desertion in suchwise as must excite our sympathy for the old age of a great man, who cannot let go his hold of the popularity which cheered his better days.

Achève : les derniers n'ont rien qui dégénère,  
 Rien qui les fasse croire enfans d'un autre père ;  
 Ce sont des malheureux étouffés au berceau  
 Qu'un seul de tes regards tireroit du tombeau.

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“Agésilas” en foule auroit des spectateurs,  
 Et “Bérénice” enfin trouveroit des acteurs,  
 Le peuple, je l'avoue, et la cour les dégradent,  
 Je foiblis, ou du moins ils se le persuadent.

Pour bien écrire encor j'ai trop long-temps écrit,  
Et les rides du front passent jusqu'à l'esprit.  
Mais contre cet abus, que j'aurois de suffrages  
Si tu donnois les tiens à mes derniers ouvrages!  
Que de tant de bonté l'impérieuse loi  
Rameneroit bientôt et peuple et cour vers moi !  
Tel Sophocle à cent ans charmoit encore Athènes,  
Tel bouillonoit encor son vieux sang dans ses veines !  
Diroient-ils à l'envi. \* \* \*

It must be told, too, that having been so long in possession of undisputed superiority, he could not behold without dissatisfaction the rising glory of his successors. His jealousy was like that of a child who requires a smile for himself whenever caresses are bestowed upon his brother. Towards the close of his life, this weakness was greatly increased by the successive decay of his bodily organs; he survived the loss of his faculties for a year, and died on the 1st of October, 1684, in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

## AGE OF LOUIS XIV.

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### X.—VARIOUS INFLUENCES COMBINING TO FORM THE LITERATURE OF THIS PERIOD—DIRECT INFLUENCE OF THE KING

WHEN LOUIS XIV. assumed the reins of government, France had received those various elements which were calculated to prepare her for a brilliant period in literature. She had been brought into close relations with the countries then most advanced in this career—namely, Spain and Italy; and she had received from the study of the ancient masters the best correctives of whatever might have been extravagant in national genius, whether her own or that of her contemporaries. The polemical distractions of the sixteenth century had gradually issued in the triumph of the old religion, which had learned some useful lessons in the conflict. It had been discovered that an ignorant priesthood could not retain its hold on the people, and that they must support their faith by argument, and not merely by a display of ecclesiastical authority. The religious earnestness which had been excited by controversy still subsisted, and preachers of high endowments gratified it by their prelections. The nation retained also the energy which had been elicited by civil commotion, though its troubles were over; and the political ascendancy of France among the kingdoms of Europe imparted buoyancy and freedom to every spirit.

But of all the influences which contributed to perfect the

literature of France in the latter half of the seventeenth century, none appeared to be so general and powerful as that of the monarch himself, whether by his immediate influence rendering his court the centre of knowledge, or that of his government imparting a general feeling of security to those who lived under it. "A single genius," says Nisard, "may arise in the midst of a stormy period, but only a good government gives birth to numbers of eminent men in various walks, and impresses on the most diversified works a common character of greatness, order, and unity."

On the other hand, those who little admire so absolute a sway as that of Louis, remind us—and not without truth—that the men who gave *éclat* to this period were formed in the more troublous times that preceded it. Their genius had taken root and sprung up in the storm of civil and religious war, but opened and bloomed in the sunshine of a powerful and peaceful monarchy.

It must be remembered what was the condition of France when Louis XIV. assumed the government. The supreme power had been swayed by prime-ministers, before whom men of high birth and superior talent found it hard to bend in servitude, and the only alternative was revolt. But now the sovereign had announced his resolution to reign himself, and every one felt his master. A powerful king had been the common want: the bourgeoisie wanted it against the nobility; the inferior nobility against the higher; the people against oppression and civil war. Royalty was the ideal of the seventeenth century; and if the disorders of the Fronde had disposed the nation to entertain it with fondness, the magnificence of Le Grand Monarque rendered it perfectly intoxicating. The predominance of the sovereign became the most prominent feature in the social character of the age, and the whole circle of the literature bears its impress. The universal admiration of *littérateurs* for Louis XIV. was not a con-



spiracy of flattery, but the strong impression which the great writers of the age received, in common with the whole body of the people, of the greatness of their king and country; "since, under this king," as Bossuet says, "France learned to know herself." Racine, one of the most upright of these *littérateurs*, depicts himself as "a man spending his life in thinking of the king, in learning the great actions of the king; a man to whom God has given grace not to blush either for the king or the gospel." No wonder that the apprehension of having lost the favor of his sovereign hastened his death. If a man lost the royal favor in those days, he lost his function in the state, and his place in society; for there was no rank then but what was held from the prince. We smile at the weakness of Racine; but if there is one among us who has passed his days in thinking of a great man, and who, after having all his life admired an ideal in a person beloved, has now lost the good graces of that person without losing his faith in the ideal, let him judge whether the desperation of Racine was unworthy of him.

But this was not all: Louis raised and improved in no mean degree the position of literary men. By granting them regular pensions, he delivered them from servitude; the regularity of the bounty making it appear as a right attached to merit, and not, as hitherto, the capricious recompense of well-turned flattery. Through the general taste, however, which the monarch contributed to diffuse, some writers were rendered absolutely independent of state reward by the public. Others attained this independence through the operation of the laws which raised them to the high offices of the state, and thus secured them a competence.

It is to be remarked, that this was an age of order and speciality in literature, in this respect strikingly unlike that which followed it. Each writer had his own sphere, and seldom quitted it for any other; the only remarkable exceptions being

Bossuet and Fénelon, who, from their peculiar position, were led to exercise some variety of talent.

It is convenient, that in displaying the literary riches of this age, we should classify them according to their subjects, and treat successively of tragedy, comedy, satirical and other poetry; of pulpit and forensic eloquence; of history, biography, philosophy, romance, and letter-writing. But then we shall find that the principal authors present themselves each under one of these heads: Racine with tragedy; Molière with comedy; Boileau with satirical and mock-heroic poetry; La Fontaine with narrative poetry; Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon, with pulpit eloquence; Patru, Péllisson, and some others, with that of the bar; Bossuet, De Retz, and St. Simon, with history and memoirs; Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère with moral philosophy; Fénelon and Madame de Lafayette with romance; and Madame de Sévigné with letter-writing.

The personal influence of the king was most marked on pulpit eloquence and dramatic poetry, both of which he assiduously attended. Other branches found less favor, from the king's dislike to those who chiefly treated them. The recollections of the Fronde had left in his mind a distrust of Rochefoucauld. A similar feeling of political jealousy, with a thorough hatred of *bel esprit*, especially in a woman, prevented him from appreciating Madame de Sévigné; and he seems not even to have observed La Bruyère in his modest functions as teacher of history to the Duke of Burgundy. He had no taste for the pure mental speculations of Malebranche or Fénelon; and in metaphysics, as in religion, had little patience for what was beyond the ordinary good sense of ordinary individuals. The same hatred of excess rendered him equally the enemy of refiners and freethinkers; so that the like exile fell to the lot of Arnauld and Bayle, the one carrying to the extreme the doctrines of grace, and the other those of sceptical inquiry. Nor did he relish the excessive simplicity of La

Fontaine, or deem that his talent was a sufficient compensation for his slovenly manners and inaptitude for court-life. Concerning all these it may be said, that they flourished with and by, as well as in the age of Louis XIV., but rather in spite of his personal influence than under its favor.

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## XI.—TRAGEDY.

RACINE, HIS LIFE AND WORKS — ANALYSIS OF *ATHALIE* — MINOR TRAGIC  
AUTHORS OF THIS PERIOD — THE OPERA.

IN introducing the most classic of French tragedians\* to the English reader, we would bespeak his indulgence by some observations of an eminent modern critic on the difference between the French drama and our own.

“It will be universally admitted, that in tragic performances nothing can be more distinctly different than the laws which regulate the French and English stage. The dissimilarity is so great that a native of either country, however candid or liberal, must have studied with some attention the literature of the other, to enable him not merely to relish, but even to endure the tragedies of the neighboring kingdom. A Parisian critic would be shocked at the representation of *Hamlet au naturel*; and the most patient spectator in the Drury Lane audience would incur some risk of dislocating his jaws with yawning during the representation of a *chef-d’œuvre* of Racine or Corneille. This difference betwixt the taste of two highly civilized nations is not surprising, when we consider that the English tragedy existed a hundred years at least

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\* The fullest and most authentic biography of Racine is from the pen of his son, Louis Racine. A brief sketch of his life is to be found in Lardner’s Cabinet Cyclopaedia.



before the French, and is therefore censured by them as partaking, to a certain extent, of the barbarity and grossness of the age of Queen Elizabeth. The two great tragedians of France, on the contrary, had the task of entertaining a polished and highly ceremonious court, whose judgment was at least as fastidious as it was correct, and in whose eyes a breach of etiquette was a more formidable crime than any deficiency in spirit or genius.

“Thus the English stage exhibited in word and in action ‘every change of many-colored life,’ mingled the tragic with the comic, the ludicrous with the horrible, seized by storm on the applause of the half-startled, half-affrighted audience, and presented to the judgment, like Salvator’s landscapes to the eye, a chaos of the wonderful mixed with the grotesque, agitating the passions too strongly to leave time to inquire whether the rules of critical taste were not frequently violated. The French stage, on the other hand, is carefully and exactly limited by a sense of decorum, which, exercised in its rigor, may be called the tyranny of taste. It is not lawful to please, says this dramatic code, unless by observance of certain arbitrary rules; or to create a deeper or more intense interest than a strict obedience to the precepts of Aristotle and his modern commentators will permit. The English authors have, therefore, preferred exhibiting striking incidents and extraordinary characters, placed in violent contrast, at the risk of shocking probability; and their keenest partisans must own that they have been often absurd when they aimed at being sublime. The French, on the other hand, limiting themselves in general to long dramatic dialogues, in which passion is rather analyzed than displayed, have sometimes become tedious by a display of ingenuity where the spectator expected touches of feeling. It follows, as a matter of course, that each country, partial to the merits of its own style of amusement, and struck with the faults which belong to a cast of composition so ex-



tremely different, is as severe in censuring the foreign stage as it is indulgent of judging of its own."

JEAN RACINE, born at Ferté-Milon in 1639, was left an orphan in his childhood, and educated at the celebrated institution of Port Royal, where he imbibed not only a taste for literature and serious study, but that deeply religious feeling which characterized without exception every great author of the great age. The docility of the young Racine was equalled only by his ardor for study. Lancelot, who had specially undertaken to teach him Greek, caught him one day reading the romance of *Theagenes and Charicles*, took it from him, and burned it. The lad procured another copy, and after a short time surrendered it to his tutor, telling him that he might burn that one too, for he had learned it by heart. His first essay in poetry—an ode composed for the nuptials of Louis XIV.—brought him under the notice of Chapelain, the king's adviser in these matters, and procured for him a pension of 600 livres. A second ode introduced him to the acquaintance of Boileau, which proved highly useful as well as honorable, and gave him advantages which had never fallen to the lot of Corneille. A little before, he had made the acquaintance of Molière, who suggested the plan of the *Thébaïde*, his first drama. That of *Alexandre* followed, and both obtained some success. They were, however, but feeble imitations of the works of Corneille, who advised the young author to attempt no more tragedy. Racine replied by producing *Andromaque*, which, though not the most perfect of his works, was that which produced the most powerful effect on the stage. The poet had discovered a new vein; he had found out that sympathy was a more powerful and durable source of tragic effect than admiration; and he had, accordingly, exercised all the powers of his genius in a truthful expression of feeling and character, and in thrilling alternations of hope and fear,

of anger and pity. *Andromaque* was followed almost every year by a new work of similar character. But now Racine surprised the public by an excursion into the domain of Molière. *Les Plaideurs*, a comedy imitated from the *Wasps* of Aristophanes, is slender in the plot, but natural, truthful, and pleasing. It was coldly received at Paris, but it proved highly successful at Versailles, which so delighted the players, that on their return to the city, they came to awake Racine at midnight, and communicate the welcome tidings. The noise of the carriages, and the tumult of the visitors in the Rue des Marais, made the neighbors believe that public justice had avenged itself on the author of *Les Plaideurs*, and that he was taken to the Bastille. All Paris rung with the news the following day, and the mistake being discovered, gave additional effect to the intelligence that the comedy had found acceptance at court. Of course it was afterwards completely successful in the city. Sometime afterwards, the celebrated Henrietta of England induced Racine and Corneille, unknown to each other, to produce a tragedy on *Bérénice*, in order to test the comparative powers of these illustrious rivals. The two pieces were represented towards the end of the year 1670; that of Corneille at the Palais-Royal by Molière's company; that of Racine at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Corneille's proved a failure, but Racine's enjoyed thirty representations in succession, honored by the tears of both court and city.

In 1677, partly disgusted at seeing his *Phèdre* hissed through the influence of a cabal, and partly from religious principle, Racine abandoned this career while yet in the full vigor both of his life and his genius. At first, he thought of devoting himself to monastic seclusion; but on maturer consideration, decided in favor of lighter bonds, and married Catherine Romanet, with whom he lived happily, and had seven children. In the same year he was appointed historiographer to the king, conjointly with Boileau; and for twelve

years the dramatic muse remained silent. Racine was then induced by Madame de Maintenon to compose a piece, not to be acted on the French boards, but in the Maison de St. Cyr, and by the pupils of that establishment. Madame de Maintenon was of opinion that theatricals are highly useful to young people, not only as an exercise of memory, but as conducive to a graceful deportment and correct pronunciation. But after having seen the young ladies act *Andromaque*, she apprehended that such pieces were calculated to inspire them with improper feelings, and wrote to Racine a request that he would compose a moral or historical drama which should entirely exclude the passion of love. *Esther* was the result, and its success was prodigious. *Athalie*, which is considered the most perfect of all Racine's compositions, was composed with similar views, but it was destined to a widely different fate. Madame de Maintenon had been advised to allow no more theatricals at St. Cyr, and the only representation granted to *Athalie* was, that the young ladies recited it in the presence of the king, in a chamber of the palace at Versailles, without any stage, or costume other than their everyday dresses. The only resource of the poet was to print his work, but it found no readers; and Racine, discouraged by this second injustice, finally abandoned the drama. He continued to be loaded with favors by the king, who gave him a public office, and admitted him to his familiar society. An unforeseen circumstance, however, deprived him of the royal favor. He was induced, by Madame de Maintenon, under promise of secrecy, to put on paper, in the form of a *Mémoire*, some views which he had expressed to her upon the misery that had been entailed on the people by the protracted war. The king got his hands upon the paper, and was highly offended. "What!" said he, "because he can make verses, does he think he knows everything? And because he is a great poet, does he pretend to be a minister too?" It seems not well agreed how far the



king gave practical effect to his displeasure. Racine was at the time laboring under a dangerous malady, and his distress at learning the fate of his *Mémoire* so aggravated the disease, that he sank under it, and never recovered. He lingered for two years, and died in 1699, so fully occupied with his immortal hopes in a future world as to be careless of his earthly renown. He refused to revise the editions of his works which the booksellers were publishing, and expressed no earthly wish except that he might be buried at Port Royal among his early instructors, and at the feet of Dr. Hamon. After the destruction of this monastery, his remains were transferred to Paris, and placed beside those of Pascal, in the church of St. Etienne-du-Mont.

Besides numerous tragedies, Racine composed odes, epigrams, and spiritual songs. By a singular combination of talent, he wrote almost as well in prose as in verse. His *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XIV.*, which remained unfinished at his death, was almost entirely destroyed in a conflagration at the house of his successor; but there remain the *Abrégé de l'Histoire de Port Royal*, some pleasing letters, and some *Discours Académiques*, among which is a eulogium on Corneille.

The *Théâtre* of Racine has had several learned commentators, and has passed through innumerable editions. We have said that *Athalie* is the most perfect of his works. It was little known or appreciated till the year 1716, since which its reputation has continually augmented. Voltaire has pronounced it "*l'ouvrage le plus approchant de la perfection qui soit jamais sorti de la main des hommes.*" Recommending the reader to make its acquaintance in the original, we subjoin an analysis, for the sake of those to whom this may be inconvenient.

The subject is taken from the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of the second book of Chronicles, where it is



written, that Athaliah, to avenge the death of her son, destroyed all the seed-royal of the house of Judah; but that the young Joash was stolen from among the rest by his aunt, Jehosheba (or Josabeth), the wife of the high-priest, and hid with his nurse for six years in the temple.

The first act opens in the temple, where Abner, the chief captain of the hosts of Judah, comes to worship, and intimates to Joad the high-priest, his fear that Athaliah will not long suffer him to minister before the altar in peace. The venerable man replies :

Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots,  
Sait aussi des méchants arrêter les complots.  
Soumis avec respect à sa volonté sainte,  
Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte.

He then sounds Abner, who is not in the secret of the child's safety, as to what he would do supposing it should turn out that a drop of the royal blood has escaped; and being satisfied of his loyalty, desires him to return in three days, at the third hour of the day, and with the same ardent zeal that he now expresses. He then privately tells his wife that the time is come when the youthful king, who goes by the name of Elia-cin, and believes himself but a foundling, should be apprised of his condition, and presented to the people. Josabeth fears to expose her protégé to the danger that would thus be incurred. She recalls the scene of the slaughter—

De princes égorgés la chambre étoit remplie ;  
Un poignard à la main, l'implacable Athalie  
Au carnage animoit ses barbares soldats,  
Et poursuivoit le cours de ses assassinats.  
Joas, laissé pour mort, frappa soudain ma vue.  
Je me figure encor sa nourrice éperdue,  
Qui devant les bourreaux s'étoit jettée en vain,  
Et foible le tenoit renversé sur son sein.

Je le pris tout sanglant ; et, baignant son visage,  
Mes pleurs du sentiment lui rendirent l'usage.  
Et, soit frayeur encore, ou pour me caresser,  
De ses bras innocents je me sentis presser.

But Joad confides in Divine succor—

Et comptez-vous pour rien Dieu qui combat pour nous ?  
Dieu, qui de l'orphelin protège l'innocence,  
Et fait dans la foiblesse éclater sa puissance ?

In the second act, Athaliah, despite the expostulations of Abner, Joad, and even of his own attendants, enters the holy place where the priests are ministering, attended by Zachariah, the son of Joad, and Eliacin (Joash), in the garb of acolytes. Being persuaded to retire, she relates to Abner and Mathan, who follow her, the fearful dream which prompted her visit—

Ma mère Jézabel devant moi s'est montrée,  
Comme au jour de sa mort pompeusement parée.  
Ses malheurs n'avoient point abattu sa fierté ;  
Même elle avoit encor cet éclat emprunté,  
Dont elle eut soin de peindre et d'orner son visage,  
Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage.  
Tremble, m'a-t-elle dit, fille digne de moi ;  
Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi ;  
Je te plains de tomber dans ses mains redoutables,  
Ma fille. En achevant ces mots épouvantables,  
Son ombre vers mon lit a paru se baisser ;  
Et moi, je lui tendois les mains pour l'embrasser.  
Mais je n'ai plus trouvé qu'un horrible mélange  
D'os et de chair meurtris et trainés dans la fange,  
Des lambeaux pleins de sang et des membres affreux,  
Que des chiens dévorants se disputoient entre eux.

She adds, that in the confusion of her ideas she saw a child in the vestments of the Hebrew priests, aiming a sword at her bosom ; that having vainly sought tranquillity by supplicating the priests of Baal, she had thought of visiting the temple

and appeasing the God of the Jews, when, lo ! the very child she had seen in her dream was there ; she saw him distinctly, but he was hastily hidden away. She desires counsel as to what is to be done. Abner does not know who the other little boy may be, who, with Zachariah, attends the priests ; and Mathan, the apostate, recommends, as the only safeguard, to destroy both, while Abner expostulates :—

Hé quoi, Mathan ! d'un prêtre est-ce là le langage ?  
 Moi, nourri dans la guerre aux horreurs du carnage,  
 Des vengeances des rois ministre rigoureux,  
 C'est moi qui prête ici ma voix aux malheureux.  
 Et vous, qui leur devez des entrailles de père,  
 Vous, ministre de paix dans les temps de colère,  
 Couvrant d'un zèle faux votre ressentiment,  
 Le sang à votre gré coule trop lentement !

Mathan suggests the possibility that this child may be educating in the temple to personate a prince of the house of Judah ; and Athaliah determines to see him again, and converse with him alone.

Laissez-moi, cher Mathan, le voir, l'interroger.  
 Vous, cependant, allez ; et, sans jeter d'alarmes,  
 A tous mes Tyriens faites prendre les armes.

Returning to the temple, she examines the children, and recognises him whom she fears.

*Athaliah (Pointing to Joash).* Epouse de Joad, est-ce là votre fils ?  
*Josabeth (Pointing to Zachariah).* Qui ? Lui, Madame ?

*Athal.* Lui ?

*Josab.* Je ne suis point sa mère.

*(Pointing to Zachariah).* Voilà mon fils.

*Athal. (To Joash).* Et vous, quel est donc votre père ?  
 Jeune enfant, répondez.

*Josab.* Le ciel jusqu'aujourd'hui . . .

*Athal. (To Josab.)* Pourquoi vous pressez-vous de répondre pour lui ?  
 C'est à lui de parler.

*Josab.* Dans un âge si tendre  
Quel éclaircissement en pouvez-vous attendre ?

*Athal.* Cet âge est innocent. Son ingénuité  
N'altère point encor la simple vérité.

Laissez-le s'expliquer sur tout ce qui le touche.

*Josab. (Aside).* Daigne mettre, grand Dieu ! ta sagesse en sa bouche.

*Athal.* Comment vous nommez-vous ?

*Joash.* J'ai nom Eliacin.

*Athal.* Votre père ?

*Joash.* Je suis, dit-on, un orphelin,  
Entre les bras de Dieu jeté dès ma naissance,  
Et qui de mes parents n'eus jamais connaissance.

\* \* \* \*

*Athal.* Mais de vos premiers ans quelles mains ont pris soin ?

*Joash.* Dieu laissa-t-il jamais ses enfants au besoin ?

Aux petits des oiseaux il donne leur pâture,  
Et sa bonté s'étend sur toute la nature.  
Tous les jours je l'invoque ; et d'un soin paternel,  
Il me nourrit des dons offerts sur son autel.

*Athal.* Quel prodige nouveau me trouble et m'embarrasse !  
La douceur de sa voix, son enfance, sa grace,  
Font insensiblement à mon inimitié  
Succéder . . . . Je serois sensible à la pitié !

She further questions him as to his employments and recreations, which he describes as consisting in aiding in the temple worship, and learning the Divine law. She invites him to quit such sombre occupations, and share the pleasures of her palace as her adopted son ; but he refuses, and she retires timid, irresolute, not knowing what course to take.

Meanwhile, Joad has determined to reveal the secret ; but first entering the temple to seek a blessing, the spirit of prophecy comes upon him.

Mais d'où vient que mon cœur frémit d'un saint effroi ?  
Est-ce l'Esprit divin qui s'empare de moi ?  
C'est lui-même : il m'échauffe ; il parle ; mes yeux s'ouvrent,  
Et les siècles obscurs devant moi se découvrent.



Lévites, de vos sons prêtez-moi les accords,  
Et de vos mouvements seconde mes transports.

The whole of this prophecy is in the highest style of poetry. It is doubtful if there is any lyric in the language to compare with these lines—

Quelle Jérusalem nouvelle  
Sort du fond du désert, brillante de clartés,  
Et porte sur le front une marque immortelle ?  
Peuples de la terre, chantez :  
Jérusalem renaît plus charmante et plus belle.  
D'où lui viennent de tous côtés  
Ces enfants qu'en son sein elle n'a point portés ?  
Lève, Jérusalem, lève ta tête altière.  
Regarde tous ces rois de ta gloire étonnés.  
Les rois des nations, devant toi prosternés,  
De tes pieds baisent la poussière.  
Les peuples à l'envi marchent à ta lumière.  
Heureux qui, pour Sion, d'une sainte ferveur  
Sentira son ame embrasée !  
Cieux, répandez votre rosée,  
Et que la terre enfante son sauveur.

In the next act, the royal diadem, the sword of David, and the book of the law, are solemnly brought out, to the amazement of the little Joash.

*Joash.* Princesse, quel est donc ce spectacle nouveau ?  
Pourquoi ce livre saint, ce glaive, ce bandeau ?  
Depuis que le Seigneur m'a reçu dans son temple,  
D'un semblable appareil je n'ai point vu d'exemple.

Josabeth evades the question, and tries the crown on his head.

*Joash.* Vous voulez essayer ce bandeau sur mon front ?  
Ah, Princesse ! gardez d'en profaner la gloire ;  
Du roi qui l'a porté respectez la mémoire.  
Un malheureux enfant, aux ours abandonné . . . .

*Josab.* Laissez, mon fils, je fais ce qui m'est ordonné.

*Joash.* Mais j'entends les sanglots sortir de votre bouche.  
Princesse, vous pleurez ! quelle pitié vous touche ?

Josabeth, overcome by her feelings, leaves him alone with Joad, who questions him as to the duties of a king, and if he were one, which king he would like to resemble. The child names David, the man after God's own heart, as his beau-ideal. Whereupon the high-priest prostrates himself at his feet.

*Joash.* Mon père, en quel état vous vois-je devant moi ?

*Joad.* Je vous rends le respect que je dois à mon roi ;  
De votre aïeul David, Joas, rendez-vous digne.

*Joash.* Joas ! Moi ?

Joad now presents the young king to the priests and Levites ; he takes the oath on the sacred book, and is anointed with the holy oil.

But Abner comes to the temple, charged with a demand from the queen, that this mysterious child be surrendered as a hostage, with some treasure of gold said to be concealed in the holy place. He advises that this be conceded, as the only means of saving the temple and all that belong to it from fire and sword. Joad admits that he has charge of a secret treasure, and promises that if it must be discovered to the queen, the doors shall be opened to her, rather than any carnage or pillage take place ; and then Abner shall be judge whether this treasure shall be put in her power. While Abner departs to bring the queen, Joab places the Levites in ambuscade about the temple, and addresses the youthful Joash :—

Roi, je crois qu'à vos vœux cet espoir est permis,  
Venez voir à vos pieds tomber vos ennemis.  
Celle dont la fureur poursuit votre enfance,  
Vers ces lieux à grands pas pour vous perdre s'avance.  
Mais ne la craignez point. Songez qu'autour de vous  
L'ange exterminateur est debout avec nous.

He places him on his throne, draws a curtain before him, and

waits the event. Presently Athaliah comes to demand the promised price of safety—the child and the treasure. Whereupon Joad draws the curtain, and reveals Joash on the throne; the nurse kneeling on his right, Azarias standing with a drawn sword on his left, the children of the high-priest kneeling on the steps, and a body of armed Levites surrounding. Joad challenges the queen to recognise the youthful sovereign by the scars of her own poniard.

*Joad.* Connais-tu l'héritier du plus saint des monarques,  
Reine? De ton poignard connais du moins ces marques.  
Voilà ton roi, ton fils, le fils d'Okosias.  
Peuples, et vous, Abner, reconnaissez Joas.

*Abner.* Ciel!

*Athal.* (*To Joad*). Perfide!

*Joad.* Vois-tu cette Juive fidèle,  
Dont tu sais bien qu'alors il suçoit la mamelle?  
Il fut par Josabeth à ta rage enlevé.  
Ce temple le reçut, et Dieu l'a conservé.  
Des trésors de David voilà ce qui me reste.

Athaliah calls on her soldiers to deliver her from this odious phantom, and Joad cries aloud:

Soldats du Dieu vivant, défendez votre roi!

Immediately the temple appears filled with armed Levites.

*Athal.* Où suis-je? O trahison! ô reine infortunée!  
D'armes et d'ennemis je suis environnée!

*Joad.* Tes yeux cherchent en vain; tu ne peux échapper,  
Et Dieu de toutes parts a su t'envelopper.  
Ce Dieu, que tu bravois, en nos mains t'a livrée.  
Rends-lui compte du sang dont tu t'es enivrée.

*Athal.* Quoi! la peur a glacé mes indignes soldats?  
Lâche Abner, dans quel piège as-tu conduit mes pas?

*Abner.* Reine, Dieu m'est témoin. . . .

*Athal.* Laisse-là ton Dieu, traître,

Et venge-moi.

*Abner* (*Casting himself at the feet of Joash*). Sur qui? Sur  
Joas! sur mon maître!

As Athaliah departs, she exclaims :

Dieu des Juifs, tu l'emportes !

Oui, c'est Joas, je cherche en vain à me tromper ;

Je reconnais l'endroit où je le fis frapper.

Je vois d'Ochosias et le port et le geste ;

Tout me retrace enfin un sang que je déteste.

The Levites follow, and slay her as soon as she gets beyond the precincts of the holy place. The whole is wound up by the lesson which Joad impresses on the youthful monarch :—

Par cette fin terrible, et due à ses forfaits,

Apprenez, roi des Juifs, et n'oubliez jamais

Que les rois dans le ciel ont un juge sévère,

L'innocence un vengeur, et l'orphelin un père.

The choruses which Racine employed in imitation of his Greek models are not only beautiful, but introduced with singular skill, and made to express such fears or hopes or prayers as naturally connect each act with that which follows. Thus the chorus which closes the first act, celebrates the greatness and goodness of the God of Israel ; recalls some striking examples of his interference, and thus aids the work of Joad in strengthening the faith of Abner, and raising the courage of Josabeth. At the end of the second act, the choir sing of the iniquity of the queen, the profanity of the adherents of Baal, and their certain destruction. At the end of the third act, they chant the hopes and fears of Sion in connexion with the prophetic strains of the high-priest. And at the close of the fourth act, when all the preparations are made, a battle-hymn comes in appropriately to invoke divine assistance.

The tragedies of Racine are more elegant than those of Corneille, though less bold and striking. Corneille's principal characters are all heroes and heroines, thrown into situations of extremity, and displaying strength of mind superior to their



position. Racine's characters are men, not heroes—men such as they are, not such as they might possibly be.

France produced no other tragic dramatists of the first class in this age. Among those of secondary merit, THOMAS CORNEILLE (1623–1709), brother of the great poet; CAMPISTRON (1656–1723), a feeble imitator of Racine; and LAFOSSE (1653–1708), are the only names worthy of mention.

Somewhat later, CREBILLON (1674–1752) found a place in the same succession, by such wild tragedies as *Atrée*, *Electre*, and *Rhadamiste*, which introduced a new element—that of terror—as a source of tragic effect. This author had passed his days in retirement at a distance from Paris, and being unacquainted with the ancient models, drew chiefly on modern authors.

Cardinal Mazarin had brought from Italy the Opera, or lyric tragedy, which was cultivated with success by QUINAULT (1635–1688). He is said to have “taken the bones out of the French language,” by cultivating an art in which thought, incident, and dialogue are made secondary to the development of tender and voluptuous feeling; and having prosecuted his work in a spirit which renders it as dangerous as it is attractive.

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## XII.—COMEDY.

REMARKS ON FRENCH COMEDY—MOLIERE'S LIFE AND WORKS—LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES—SCENE FROM TARTUFE—LE MISANTHROPE—DEATH OF MOLIERE—MINOR COMIC DRAMATISTS OF THIS AGE.

“THE difference in the national tastes of France and England,” says the writer formerly quoted, “so very remarkable when we compare the tragedies of the two countries, is much less conspicuous in their comic dramas; where, setting aside

their emancipation from the tenets of the Stagyrice, the English comic writers do or ought to propose to themselves the same object with the French of the same class. As a proof of this, we may remark, that very few French tragedies have ever been translated, and of these still fewer have become permanently popular, or have been reckoned stock-plays; whereas the English authors, from the age of the great man of whom we are about to speak, down to the present day, have been in the habit of transferring to the British stage almost all the comedies that have been well received in France."

The comedy of intrigue, borrowed from Spain, and turning upon disguises, scaling-ladders, dark-lanterns, and trap-doors, to help or hinder the designs of personages who were types, not of individual character, but of certain classes—as lawyers, doctors, lovers, confidants—such was the comic drama which occupied the French stage till the middle of the seventeenth century, relieved occasionally by the lively absurdity of the Italian farce. The great Corneille, "the father of modern tragedy," had made some approach to true comedy also in *Le Menteur*. His brother Thomas, however, had returned to the old school, which

"Filled the stage with all the crowd  
Of fools pursuing, and of fools pursued,  
Whose ins and outs no ray of sense discloses,  
Whose deepest plot is how to break folks' noses."

It was reserved for Molière to demolish all this childishness, and enthrone the true Thalia on the French stage.

Six years had elapsed since the departure of Shakspeare, who had opened genuine sources of comedy, and Cervantes, who had withal withered and scattered from the field the flowers of chivalry, when this brother genius was born in 1622, at once the Terence and the Shakspeare of France. Like Shakspeare, he was both an author and an actor, and his celebrity demands that we briefly trace his progress.

MOLIERE'S real name was JEAN BAPTISTE POQUELIN ; his progenitors on both sides, a race of respectable burghers, who dealt in tapestry and carpets. The father of our poet enjoyed the privilege of being purveyor of these articles to the king—Louis XIII.—and also of serving him as valet-de-chambre. To succeed to such honor was the destination of Jean Baptiste ; but his tastes being utterly averse to business, he pleaded, and with success, for a more liberal education, and was sent, accordingly, to the Jesuits' College at Clermont, now known as the College of Louis le Grand. It is believed that on the completion of this course he began the study of law, and that he was actually admitted to the bar ; but instead of frequenting the legal courts, he assiduously attended such theatricals as then amused the metropolis. Finally, he placed himself at the head of a group of young men, who began by acting plays for mere amusement, and ended by performing with a view to emolument.

Molière had now embraced a profession infamous in the eye of the law, involving excommunication from the church, and deeply degrading in the view of society. His relatives disowned him, and erased his name from the family-tree : he adopted that of Molière, and set out with his company to travel through the provinces. Little is known of him during the years thus spent, from 1646 till 1658, when he returned to Paris, and through the influence of the Prince of Conti obtained royal license to open a theatre in emulation of that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The pieces he had already composed for his company and acted in the provinces, were here received with considerable favor ; but all were eclipsed in the following year by the appearance of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, the first of those numerous comedies in which the gifted poet assailed the follies of his age, and, according to the precept of Horace, *castigat ridendo mores*. The object of this satire was the system of solemn sentimentality which at this time was consi-

dered the perfection of elegance. It will be remembered that there existed at Paris a coterie of fashionable women, who pretended to the most exalted refinement both of feeling and expression, and that these were waited upon and worshipped by a set of nobles and littérateurs, who used towards them a peculiar strain of high-flown pedantic gallantry, like that which was formerly the mode in England, when every maid of honor spoke the affected jargon called euphuism.\*

These ladies adopted fictitious names for themselves, and gave enigmatical ones to the commonest things. A night-cap was called *le complice innocent de mensonge*; a chaplet, *une chaîne spirituelle*; water, *l'humeur celeste*; thieves, *les braves incommodés*; and a disdainful smile, *un bouillon d'orgueil*. The ladies lavished upon each other the most tender appellations, as though in contrast to the frigid tone in which the platonism of the Hôtel required them to address the gentlemen of their circle. *Ma chère, ma précieuse*, were the terms most frequently used by the leaders of this world of folly; and a *précieuse* came to be synonymous with a lady of the clique; hence the title of Molière's comedy. In this celebrated piece, two females, the daughter and niece of a worthy burgess called Gorgibus, are represented as having become infected with this false wit and sentimentality, and having adopted the sonorous names of Aminte and Polixène, with all the jargon belonging to the school we have described. Setting themselves up as *précieuses* of the highest order, they entertain, of course, a sovereign contempt for honest Gorgibus, whose distress, perplexity, and resentment are extreme when he finds the young ladies habitually talking in a style which he cannot comprehend, and acting in a manner that leads him to doubt their sanity of mind. And now two gentlemen, approved by Gorgibus as suitable matches for his damsels, are rejected by them with such extremity of scorn, that they determine to avenge themselves. This they do by causing their

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\* See pp. 150-2.



two valets—impudent, conceited coxcombs, of course—to be introduced to Aminte and Polixène as men of rank and fashion. The précieuses mistake the extravagant finery, the second-hand airs, and the vulgar impudence of the Marquis de Mascarille, and the Vicomte de Jodelet, for the acme of wit and gallantry. The discovery of the mistake, and the shame and confusion with which the unfortunate sentimentalists are overwhelmed, form the diverting conclusion of the drama.

The piece was received with unanimous applause. An old man starting up in the *parterre*, exclaimed: "Courage, Molière; this is true comedy!" The précieuses themselves yielded to the rebuke. "Leaving the theatre," says Ménage, a poetical member of the circle, "I took Monsieur Chapelain by the hand, and said: 'We have been used to approve of all the follies so wittily satirized in this piece; but believe me, as St. Remi said to King Clovis, "We must burn what we have adored, and adore what we have burned."' " It happened as I predicted; and we gave up this bombastic nonsense from the time of the first representation." A more signal victory could not have been gained by a comic poet; and the author perceiving that he had found the true vein, declared himself resolved henceforth to study human society more, and Terence and Plautus less.

In pursuance of this resolution, he composed comedy after comedy, consisting of true pictures of the follies of society, idealized and grouped by the fancy, but faithful to nature throughout.

The splendors of the reign of Louis XIV. were now (1661) beginning to shine out in all their brilliancy. The first attempt, however, at a fête superior in splendor, originality, and beauty, to anything that modern Europe had yet seen, was made, not by the king himself, but by Fouquet, the financial minister. In an evil hour for himself, this man obtained permission to

entertain royalty at his château of Vaux, laid under contribution all the taste and talent within his reach, and exhausted every species of incense which could be offered to a royal idol. The beautiful Bejart, whom Molière afterwards married, appeared as a Naiad, and delivered an elegant compliment, composed by Péliſſon; while Molière, besides repeating his *Ecole des Maris*, composed and performed pieces which none but himself could have invented. Among other things, was a magnificent ballet, and a slight sketch, called *Les Fâcheux*, consisting of a series of detached scenes, to be acted during the intervals while the dancers were changing their dresses and characters for the different scenes of the ballet. In *Les Fâcheux*, a lover, who has an interview with his mistress, is represented as interrupted by a succession of *fâcheux* ("bores,") who come intruding their company and their follies upon him. A novel kind of amusement thus added intellectual pleasures to those of luxury and feasting; and it is recorded, as an instance of Molière's readiness, that the king having suggested an addition to the *Fâcheux* in the character of a devoted sportsman relating the details of a hunting-match, Molière contrived to have this supplement ready for the following evening, by inducing the king's *grand veneur* to furnish suitable details. While we are on the subject of this entertainment, we remind the reader, as there will be more than one occasion to advert to it again, that it sealed the doom of Fouquet. The king's resentment and jealousy, already roused by the ingenious magnificence of his host, was raised to the highest pitch by seeing, in the private cabinet of the financier, a portrait of Mademoiselle la Vallière, his own favorite mistress. Disdaining to express his real feeling, he pretended another cause of displeasure, alleging that Fouquet could not have afforded such an expenditure unless he had been guilty of peculation. The queen-mother's expostulations alone pre-

vented his being arrested on the spot, and the punishment was delayed till it could appear less scandalous.

More than one of Molière's pieces were directed against the ignorance of the medical faculty, which, in truth, was at this time deplorable. In one, he represented the doctors as ambling on mules through the streets, attired in an antique dress; conducting their consultations in a barbarous Latinity, or in the vernacular, rendered unintelligible by scholastic formulæ and technical terms; each threatening the instant death of the patient if any but his treatment were followed; so that the audience was inclined to agree with Lisette, that a man should not be said to have died of such or such a disease, but of so many apothecaries and physicians.

The comedy of *Le Tartufe*, again, is directed against religious hypocrisy; and the scruples of the king, infused chiefly by the celebrated preachers of the day, kept it long suppressed, which perhaps tended to render it more perfect. It represents a religious professor, under the name of Tartufe, attracting the notice of Orgon by his singular piety; insinuating himself into the family, of which he sets all the members by the ears, and nearly succeeding in turning them all out of doors, when his villany is discovered, and a sovereign act of Le Grand Monarque sets everything right. The following is a good scene. Orgon, returning from the country, meets Cléante, his brother-in-law, in whose presence he inquires of Dorine, the nurse, how it has fared with the family in his absence:—

*Orgon.* Ah! mon frère, bon jour!

*Cléante.* Je sortais, et j'ai joie à vous voir de retour.

La campagne à présent n'est pas beaucoup fleurie.\*

*Orgon (à Cléante).* Dorine. Mon beau-frère, attendez, je vous prie. Vous voulez bien souffrir, pour m'ôter de souci, Que je m'informe un peu des nouvelles d'ici.

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\* Très-fleurie.

(à *Dorine*.)

Tout s'est-il, ces deux jours, passé de bonne sorte ?

Qu'est-ce qu'on fait céans, comme\* est-ce qu'on s'y porte ?

*Dorine*. Madame eut, avant-hier, la fièvre jusqu'au soir,  
Avec un mal de tête étrange à concevoir.

*Orgon*. Et Tartufe ?

*Dorine*. Tartufe ? Il se porte à merveille,  
Gros et gras, le teint frais, et la bouche vermeille.

*Orgon*. Le pauvre homme !

*Dorine*. Le soir, elle eut un grand dégoût,  
Et ne put, au souper, toucher à rien du tout,  
Tant sa douleur de tête était encor cruelle.

*Orgon*. Et Tartufe ?

*Dorine*. Il soupa, lui tout seul, devant elle ;  
Et fort dévotement il mangea deux perdrix,  
Avec une moitié de gigot en hachis.

*Orgon*. Le pauvre homme !

*Dorine*. La nuit se passa tout entière,  
Sans qu'elle pût fermer un moment la paupière ;  
Des chaleurs l'empêchaient de pouvoir sommeiller,  
Et jusqu'au jour près d'elle il nous fallut veiller.

*Orgon*. Et Tartufe ?

*Dorine*. Pressé d'un sommeil agréable,  
Il passa dans sa chambre au sortir de la table ;  
Et dans son lit bien chaud il se mit tout soudain,  
Où, sans trouble, il dormit jusqu'au lendemain.

*Orgon*. Le pauvre homme !

*Dorine*. A la fin, par nos raisons gagnée,  
Elle se résolut à souffrir la saignée,  
Et le soulagement suivit tout aussitôt.

*Orgon*. Et Tartufe ?

*Dorine*. Il reprit courage comme il faut ;  
Et, contre tous les maux fortifiant son âme,  
Pour réparer le sang qu'avait perdu madame,  
But, à son déjeuner, quatre grands coups de vin.

*Orgon*. Le pauvre homme !†

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\* Comment.

† This was borrowed from the king himself. His majesty having one



*Dorine.* Tous deux se portent bien enfin,  
Et je vais à madame annoncer par avance  
La part que vous prenez à sa convalescence. (*Elle sort.*)

*Cléante.* A votre nez, mon frère, elle se rit de vous;  
Et, sans avoir dessein de vous mettre en courroux,  
Je vous dirai, tout franc, que c'est avec justice.  
A-t-on jamais parlé d'un semblable caprice?  
Et se peut-il qu'un homme ait un charme aujourd'hui  
A vous faire oublier toutes choses pour lui?  
Qu'après avoir chez vous réparé sa misère,  
Vous en veniez au point. . . .

*Orgon.* Halte-là, mon beau-frère;  
Vous ne connaissez pas celui dont vous parlez.

*Cléante.* Je ne le connais pas, puisque vous le voulez;  
Mais enfin, pour savoir quel homme ce peut être . . . .

*Orgon.* Mon frère, vous seriez charmé de le connaître,  
Et vos ravissements ne prendraient point de fin.  
C'est un homme . . . qui . . . ah! . . . un homme . . . un homme  
enfin

Qui suit bien ses leçons, goûte une paix profonde,  
Et comme du fumier regarde tout le monde.  
Oui, je deviens tout autre avec son entretien:  
Il m'enseigne à n'avoir affection pour rien;  
De toutes amitiés il détache mon âme;  
Et je verrais mourir frère, enfants, mère et femme,  
Que je m'en soucierais, autant que de cela.

*Cléante.* Les sentiments humains, mon frère, que voilà!

*Orgon.* Ah! si vous aviez vu comme j'en fis rencontre,  
Vous auriez pris pour lui l'amitié que je montre.  
Chaque jour à l'église il venait, d'un air doux,  
Tout vis-à-vis de moi se mettre à deux genoux.

day invited a bishop to join in the dinner of which he was about to partake, the prelate declined, alleging that he had already eaten the only meal which he allowed himself on a fast-day. When he had withdrawn, a courtier, who had scarcely suppressed a smile, gave Louis a particular account of his reverence's dinner, dish after dish, in long succession, and all done ample justice to. As each viand was named, the king exclaimed *Le pauvre homme* with such comic variety of voice and countenance, that Molière, who was present, took the hint, and transferred it to his play.

Il attirait les yeux de l'assemblée entière,  
 Par l'ardeur dont au ciel il poussait sa prière :  
 Il faisait des soupirs, de grands élancements,  
 Et baisait humblement la terre à tous moments ;  
 Et, lorsque je sortais, il me devançait vite,  
 Pour m'aller à la porte offrir de l'eau bénite.  
 Instruit par son garçon, qui dans tout l'imitait,  
 Et de son indigence, et de ce qu'il était,  
 Je lui faisais des dons ; mais, avec modestie,  
 Il me voulait toujours en rendre une partie :  
*C'est trop*, me disait-il, *c'est trop de la moitié ;*  
*Je ne mérite pas de vous faire pitié ;*  
 Et quand je refusais de le vouloir reprendre,  
 Aux pauvres, à mes yeux, il allait le répandre.  
 Enfin le ciel chez moi me le fit retirer,  
 Et, depuis ce temps-là, tout semble y prospérer :  
 Je vois qu'il reprend tout, et qu'à ma femme même  
 Il prend pour mon honneur un intérêt extrême ;  
 Il m'avertit des gens qui lui front les yeux doux,  
 Et plus que moi six fois il s'en montre jaloux.  
 Mais vous ne croiriez point jusqu'où monte son zèle :  
 Il s'impute à péché la moindre bagatelle ;  
 Un rien presque suffit pour le scandaliser ;  
 Jusque-là qu'il se vint l'autre jour accuser  
 D'avoir pris une puce en faisant sa prière,  
 Et de l'avoir tuée avec trop de colère.

Thus wrote Molière ; and whether it was the absurdities of *L'Etourdi*, the sentimental jargon of the *Précieuses*, the foolish quarrels of lovers in the *Dépit Amoureux*, the jealousy of husbands in *L'Ecole des Maris*, the fopperies of men of fashion in *Les Fâcheux*, the exposure of hypocrisy in *Tartufe*, the picture at once of dissimulation and of untractable virtue in the *Misanthrope*, the effects of mésalliances in *Georges Dandin*, the tricks of domestics in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, the affectation of learning in *Les Femmes Savantes*, the dupes who take physic, and the knaves who administer it, in *Le Malade Imaginaire*—all went to prove that he possessed a falcon's eye

for the detection of vice and folly in every shape, and talons for pouncing upon all as the natural prey of the satirist.

Next to the truth of these pictures, the simplicity of their handling is considered the greatest merit; and so sensible was the author of this, that, as a check upon any deviation from it, he used to read his comedies in manuscript to his house-keeper, La Forêt, before producing them in public. On the boards, he always undertook the principal character himself; and he was a comedian, we are told, from top to toe: by a step, a smile, a wink, a nod, he said more in a moment than words could have expressed in an hour.

Molière may now be considered as having attained the zenith of his prosperity. He was highly distinguished by the king, and the prime favorite of the best society in Paris; to have him to read a play was sufficient to give any *réunion* the stamp of fashion as well as intellect. Fifteen years of continued triumph attended his literary career; years, not indeed of peace, for Molière was surrounded by enemies his satires had made—but years of victorious war with adversaries whom he despised, defied, and conquered. Notwithstanding the proverbial fickleness of kingly courts and popular audiences, Molière appears never to have lost ground for a moment; his praise was the theme of every tongue, from that of the Grand Monarque to the meanest of his subjects. His income arising from profits as manager, actor, and author, together with his pension, amounted to a handsome sum; he not only enjoyed everything necessary for himself, but had something to spare, and was even profuse in his charities, especially towards silent and modest sufferers. The Great Condé used to say that he never conversed with him without learning something new; but fearing to trespass on his time by sending for him inopportunely, he begged that Molière would visit him when most convenient to himself, simply announcing his intention beforehand. A few, however, in the court circle were shocked at the king's

familiarity with his valet-de-chambre ; and some of the officers of the royal household deemed themselves likely to be sullied by the society of a comedian. It is related by Madame de Campan, that the king having heard of their refusing to admit Molière to their table, said to him one morning : “ Molière, I’m told you make but bad cheer here, and I myself feel something of an appetite ; let us have the *en cas de nuit*.” (This was a fowl which was kept in constant readiness during the night, lest his majesty should awake hungry.) “ See,” said the monarch to some noblemen who entered while they were eating, “ I am obliged to help Molière to eat, as my people do not think him good enough company for them.”

It was taken into consideration to elect Molière a member of the French Academy, but it was judged indispensable that he should consent to give up acting low comedy. Boileau, who was charged with the negotiation, endeavored to persuade him to this ; but he refused, saying that he was attached to the stage by a point of honor. “ What honor ? ” said Boileau—“ that of painting your face and assuming the disguise of a buffoon in order to be cudgelled on a public stage ? ” “ The point of honor,” answered Molière, “ is not to desert a hundred or more persons who depend upon my exertions for support.” In his heart, indeed, he knew and felt the vexations attached to his calling. He said to one who wished to follow it : “ It is the last resource of those who have nothing better. You think, perhaps, that we have our pleasures ; but you are mistaken. Apparently, we are sought after by the great, and truly we minister to their amusement ; but there is nothing so sad as being the slaves of their caprice. The rest of the world look on us as the refuse of mankind, and despise us accordingly.” Molière, then, was not without his compensations. There was a touch of melancholy beneath his humor ; he always regretted the sorrow he had occasioned his relations, and this was no way compensated by the results of



his marriage, which proved as unhappy as it had been imprudent. Poor man! he thought he could have enjoyed a well-regulated home; but he was unable either to fix the affections of his wife, or reform her morals, or even induce her to maintain in the house that neatness and order without which he could not feel it a comfortable resort.

*Le Malade Imaginaire* was the last of Molière's works. The hypochondriacal victim of Esculapian roguery is, in this case, endowed no less with a love of medicine than with a spirit of frugality, and seeks to diminish in every possible way the cost of his fancied indisposition. The expenses of a sick-bed are anxiously discussed, and Argan, after taxing his apothecary's bill, discovers that it is no wonder he has not been so well for the last month, as he has swallowed fewer drugs by one-third than he had done the month before; yet he concludes that if the apothecary does not become more reasonable in his charges, he cannot afford to be sick any longer. The determination, *Je le dirai à Monsieur Purgon, afin qu'il mette ordre à cela*, has been pronounced irresistibly comic. The hypochondriac next resolves to give his daughter in marriage to a young cub of a medical student, about to take his degree, so that he may have in his own family the advice he has hitherto paid so much for. The match is successfully opposed by the inclinations of the daughter, and the manœuvres of her favored lover, seconded by a lively fille-de-chambre; so that the pedantic young candidate for the privilege of killing or curing is finally dismissed. Argan is at last advised that the surest and cheapest way of battling with disease and its attendant expenses, will be to become a physician himself. At first he modestly suggests his want of preparatory study, and even of the necessary knowledge of the Latin language. But this is overruled by the assurance, that on putting on the robe and cap of a physician, he will find himself at once endowed with all the learning requisite for exercising the profession;

because, say his advisers, under this garb gibberish becomes learning, and folly wisdom. His determination to follow their advice leads to the concluding interlude, which represents the mock-ceremony of receiving him into the Esculapian fraternity. It is couched in macaronic Latin, and includes an oath, by which the candidate pledges himself to administer the remedies prescribed by the ancients, whether right or wrong, and never to use any but those approved by the college.

When the poet brought out the *Malade Imaginaire*, he was himself really ill. On the fourth night, his friends would fain have persuaded him not to go on the boards. "I must," he replied; "there are fifty people whose daily bread depends on the daily receipts." He acted accordingly, stifling his real agonies to give utterance and interest to the complaints of feigned or fancied sickness in the person of Argan; repressing the voice of mortal suffering to affect that of a hypochondriac for public amusement. At length, when the closing scene arrived, and as a candidate for medical honors he had to assent to the oath administered—

Maladus dûit il crevare  
Et mori de suo malo—

As he pronounced the word *juro* (I swear), he was seized with a convulsive cough; the falling of the curtain was hurried, for it was evident something was wrong; and Molière was carried home dying. Becoming aware of his situation, he desired that a priest might be sent for; and one after another was applied to, but refused to attend. A third came too late, for Molière was insensible, and soon after expired, supported by two sisters of charity, who had often experienced his bounty.

Dying thus in a state of excommunication, Molière was not entitled to Christian burial according to the canons; and the archbishop of Paris gave directions accordingly. The widow hastened to Versailles, and threw herself at the feet of the

king, arguing, that if her husband had been guilty of crime in composing and acting comedies, his majesty, who had commanded and witnessed his performances, must have been a partaker in the guilt. The king dismissed her somewhat abruptly, but gave private instructions to the prelate to remove the interdict. The funeral took place, accordingly, but with "maimed rites"—that is, the body was not presented in the church, or honored with any funeral-chant, but was conveyed to a grave in the church-yard, followed by two priests in silence, and about a hundred friends bearing torches. An excited mob threatened to interrupt the humble procession; but their religious misgivings were not proof against the money which the widow threw from the windows to appease them, and they quietly joined the company.

Those who have written upon this passage of Molière's history, whether in French or in English, have been loud and wrathful in their censures of the bigotry which attempted to deny Christian burial to Molière. But there was no canon-law more explicit, or more generally approved, than that which denied Christian burial to comedians; and it would have been a singular stretch of the right of private judgment, for the administrators of that law to make an exception on the mere ground of Molière's superior talent—a consideration, it might have been argued, which only aggravated his guilt. On the other hand, how little the admirers of Molière have themselves made of him by grumbling on the subject! If such were his talents, such the excellent use he made of them, such his social virtues, as to hallow his profession, and entitle him to smile at church censure while he lived, they might surely have sufficed to consecrate a spot of ground for his tomb, and his lifeless remains need not have come begging the church's pardon, and craving admission within her precincts. But Molière would thus have humbled himself in his latest hour had the opportunity been afforded. The age of Louis XIV. was not

that of haughty infidelity. It was an age of religious feeling, however mistaken.

It was far otherwise in the following century. The academicians then placed Molière's bust in their hall, with this inscription—

“Rien ne manque à sa gloire; il manquait à la nôtre.”

In 1769, his eulogy was made the subject of a prize, which was gained by Chamfort; and on the occasion of its recital, two Poquelins were hunted out from their obscurity, to fill conspicuous places in the audience as kinsmen of the poet. During the revolution, his remains were removed from place to place, and it is doubtful whether they now actually repose under the stone erected to their honor in the cemetery of Père la Chaise.\*

*Le Misanthrope*, *Les Femmes Savantes*, and *Tartufe*, are considered models of high comedy, and the best of Molière's. Among these, some award the palm to *Le Misanthrope* as the most perfect; but *Tartufe* is certainly the most powerful, and has best sustained its popularity.

The English drama has been enriched by versions of many of Molière's best pieces; but we are ashamed to say, too often with the gratuitous addition of a coarseness not found in the original.

At a great distance from Molière in point of merit, but the first after him, was the frivolous REGNARD (1647–1709), author of *Le Joueur* and *Le Légataire*, which exhibit a happy dramatic structure, and a light, free, and foolish *gaieté*, but not the true comic of Molière. DANCOURT (1661–1726) is still less celebrated than Regnard; but he exhibited one of the

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\* An interesting account of the ceremonies at the erection of a statue of Molière in Paris on January 15, 1844, may be found in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 82. For a sketch of his life see Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*.



gifts of Molière, in depicting the follies and vices of his age, not always, however, with due regard to decorum. The comedies of DUFRESNY (1648–1724) are considered witty sketches, animated by delicate comic humor. BRUEYS (1640–1723) made a happy *rifacimento* of the old farce of *L'Avocat Pathelin*.

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### XIII.—FABLES AND TALES IN VERSE.

LA FONTAINE, HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER—TALES—FABLES—ANECDOTES—  
HIS SICKNESS, CONVERSION, AND DEATH.

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE,\* the prince of fabulists, was born at Château-Thierry in 1621, where his father was keeper of the royal domains. He seems to have received little regular education in early life, and to have read at hap-hazard whatever fell in his way. Some religious books, which had been lent him by a canon of Soissons, put it into his head that he had tastes which would suit a life of religious retirement; and in 1641, he was received into the order of the Oratoire, and sent to the seminary of St. Magloire at Paris. But the worthy ecclesiastic whose books had suggested this step, had the penetration to see that his young protégé had mistaken his vocation, and he assisted him to escape from it. On his return to the paternal roof, his father desired him to assume the charge of the domain, and to unite himself in marriage with a family relative. With unthinking docility, La Fontaine consented to both, but neglected alike his official duties and domestic obligations, with an innocent unconsciousness of there being any harm in his conduct. He was a mere child of nature—indolent, easy, led by the whim of the moment rather than governed by any ruling passion, or guided by any fixed prin

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\* See Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia.

ciple. In his person he was tall, and would have been handsome, but for his slouching gait and awkward carriage, while his well-marked features expressed that perfection of simplicity and good-humor which were manifest in all his actions.

It was hearing an ode of Malherbe's recited that first revealed to La Fontaine his poetic talent, and determined him to cultivate it. He studied the classics of antiquity, and the old authors of his own country, as Rabelais, Marot, and Racan, who were throughout life his favorites, as well as Ariosto, Boccaccio, and Macchiavelli, utterly disrelishing the fastidious and artificial style of the Balzacs, Voitures, and Cotins. This, however, was the effect of mere natural taste: Boileau had not yet written his art of poetry, nor Molière exposed to ridicule the conceits and mannerisms of the *Précieuses*.

The Duchess of Bouillon, happening to be spending some time at Château-Thierry, first discerned, it would seem, the poetical talents of La Fontaine, and advised him to cultivate simple and playful narration in verse. She afterwards brought him to Paris, and thenceforth he passed his days in her coteries, with those of Boileau and Racine, utterly forgetful of his home and his family, except when his pecuniary necessities obliged him to visit Château-Thierry, to sell portions of his property for the supply of his wants. This practice of consuming the principal after the interest was gone, '*Mangeant son fonds après son revenu*,' as he himself expressed it, would soon have left him destitute, had he not become known to the prodigal financier Fouquet, who settled on him a liberal pension, on condition of a quarterly quittance in verse. Such was the occasion of some of the most beautiful of his minor pieces. The disgrace of Fouquet afterwards elicited an elegy full of pathos, addressed to Louis XIV. on behalf of his fallen patron.

Colbert, the enemy and successor of Fouquet, took away the pension, and La Fontaine was, during the rest of his life,

dependent on the kindness of female discerners of merit. First, Henrietta of England, the daughter of Charles I., attached him to her suite, with a salary for which no service was expected. At her death, Madame de la Sablière, perceiving his inability to manage the simplest housekeeping, gave him an apartment in her dwelling, supplied his wants, and indulged his humors for twenty years, which seem to have been the happiest of his life. His patroness then retiring to a convent, La Fontaine was again in danger of destitution, when Madame d'Hervart, the wife of a rich financier, offered him a similar asylum. Whilst on her way to make the proposal, she met him in the street, and said: "La Fontaine, will you come and live in my house?"—"I was just going, madame," he replied, as if his doing so had been the simplest and most natural thing in the world. And here he remained the rest of his days.

In the year 1654—that is, several years before his emergence from the seclusion of Château-Thierry—he had published a translation of the *Eunuch* of Terence; but his first original work was a collection of tales, undertaken to please the Duchess of Bouillon, and published about the year 1665. The sources of these tales were various. The old literature of France furnished abundance of materials, more even than was known at the time. It does not appear that La Fontaine had perused the fabliaux and allegorical tales of the middle ages, which still remained in manuscript; but he had met them, here and there, at second hand, in the Italian authors of the sixteenth century. It must be added, that these tales betray the licentiousness of the originals on which they were founded; and there is none of them we can desire to introduce to the reader except the story of the *Falcon*, which is in substance the same as one in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.

The story tells, that there once lived at Florence a wealthy noble, who loved a certain lady—loved so passionately, that

for her he would have bartered his soul ; so foolishly, that he spent almost his all in entertainments, of which the sole object was to please her. No return, however, could he obtain but haughty indifference. At length, his prodigal expenditure left him neither money nor lands, but a little farm, to which he retired to hide the shame of his poverty and the failure of his suit. Here he had only one domestic, a toothless old woman ; one pretty good horse in the stable, and a falcon on the perch. The quondam marquis wandered about the little spot, sacrificing to his melancholy many a partridge that was not to blame for the cruelty of his mistress ; while the friends of his prosperity said it was a pity, a great pity, but none held out a hand to help him.

Meanwhile the lady had been married, and her husband dying, left her a sickly child, and a large estate, which she should inherit in case of his death. As is usually the case where there is a delicate nursling, the mother thought she never could do enough to please him, and spent her life in studying his humors, which only increased with the indulgence. Every day, and all day, she would ask if he liked what he had got ; if he could fancy this thing to eat, or that to play with, till the boy did not know what whim to take next. Being mistress of a château, which happened to be within five hundred steps of Frédéric's retreat, the widow took the child there for change. He heard the fame of the falcon, and its wonderful achievements in capturing game ; and now he would have this wonderful bird ; and the more ill he became, the more the desire of possessing it increased. What could the fond mother do ? How could she deprive Frédéric of his only remaining treasure ? Or how, indeed, could she hope to obtain it ? She had shown nothing but ingratitude for his endeavors to win her regard. With what face could she go to see him, and speak to him, after being the cause of his ruin ? But, on the other hand, the child was pining



away; he refused his food; and the only way in which he could be beguiled into eating, was for some one to talk to him about the falcon. Maternal feeling at length prevailed over every other consideration. But we must allow the poet to tell the rest himself:—

Chez Frédéric la dame un beau matin  
S'en va sans suite et sans nul équipage.  
Frédéric prend pour un ange des cieux  
Celle qui vient d'apparaître à ses yeux.  
Mais cependant il a honte, il enrage  
De n'avoir pas chez soi pour lui donner  
Tant seulement un malheureux dîner.  
Le pauvre état où sa dame le trouve  
Le rend confus. Il dit donc à la veuve:  
"Quoi! venir voir le plus humble de ceux  
Que vos beautés ont rendus amoureux!  
Un villageois, un hère, un misérable!  
C'est trop d'honneur; votre bonté m'accable.  
Assurément vous alliez autre part."  
A ce propos notre veuve repart:  
"Non, non, seigneur, c'est pour vous la visite;  
Je viens manger avec vous ce matin."  
"Je n'ai," dit-il, "cuisinier ni marmite;  
Que vous donner?" "N'avez-vous pas du pain?"  
Reprit la dame. Incontinent lui-même  
Il va chercher quelque œuf au poulailler,  
Quelque morceau de lard en son grenier.  
Le pauvre amant, en ce besoin extrême,  
Voit son faucon, sans raisonner le prend,  
Lui tord le cou, le plume, le fricasse,  
Et l'assaisonne, et court de place en place.  
Tandis la vieille a soin du demeurant,  
Fouille au bahut, choisit pour cette fête  
Ce qu'ils avaient de linge plus honnête,  
Met le couvert, va cueillir au jardin  
Du serpolet, un peu de romarin,  
Cinq ou six fleurs dont la table est jonchée.  
Pour abréger, on sert la fricassée;

La dame en mange, et feint d'y prendre goût.  
Le repas fait, cette femme résout  
De hasarder l'incivile requête,  
Et parle ainsi : " Je suis folle, seigneur,  
De m'en venir vous arracher le cœur.  
Encore un coup, il ne m'est guère honnête  
De demander a mon défunt amant  
L'oiseau qui fait son seul contentement ;  
Doit-il pour moi s'en priver un moment ?  
Mais excusez une mère affligée :  
Mon fils se meurt : il veut votre faucon.  
Mon procédé ne mérite un tel don ;  
La raison veut que je sois refusée ;  
Je ne vous ai jamais accordé rien :  
Votre repos, votre honneur, votre bien  
S'en sont allés aux plaisirs de Clitie ;  
Vous m'aimiez plus que votre propre vie.  
A cet amour j'ai très-mal répondu ;  
Et je m'en viens, pour comble d'injustice,  
Vous demander . . . . et quoi ? c'est temps perdu :  
Votre faucon. Mais non, plutôt périsse  
L'enfant, la mère, avec le demeurant,  
Que de vous faire un déplaisir si grand.  
Souffrez, sans plus, que cette triste mère,  
Aimant d'amour la chose la plus chère  
Que jamais femme au monde puisse avoir,  
Un fils unique, une unique espérance,  
S'en vienne au moins s'acquitter du devoir  
De la nature, et pour toute allégeance  
En votre sein décharger sa douleur.  
Vous savez bien par votre expérience  
Que c'est d'aimer ; vous le savez, seigneur ;  
Ainsi je crois trouver chez vous excuse."  
" Hélas !" reprit l'amant infortuné,  
" L'oiseau n'est plus ; vous en avez diné."  
" L'oiseau n'est plus !" dit la veuve confuse.  
" Non," reprit-il, " plutôt au ciel vous avoir  
Servi mon cœur, et qu'il eût pris la place  
De ce faucon ! mais le sort me fait voir

Qu'il ne sera jamais en mon pouvoir  
 De mériter de vous aucune grâce.  
 En mon pailler rien ne m'était resté ;  
 Depuis deux jours la bête a tout mangé.  
 J'ai vu l'oiseau ; je l'ai tué sans peine :  
 Rien coûte-t-il quand on reçoit sa reine ?  
 Ce que je puis pour vous est de chercher  
 Un bon faucon : ce n'est chose si rare  
 Que dès demain nous n'en puissions trouver."  
 "Non, Frédéric," dit-elle, "je déclare  
 Que c'est assez ; vous ne m'avez jamais  
 De votre amour donné plus grande marque.  
 Que mon fils soit enlevé par la Parque,  
 Ou que le ciel le rende à mes souhaits,  
 J'aurai pour vous de la reconnaissance.  
 Venez me voir, donnez m'en l'espérance :  
 Encore un coup, venez nous visiter."  
 Elle partit, non sans lui présenter  
 Une main blanche, unique témoignage  
 Qu'Amour avait amolli son courage.  
 Le pauvre amant prit la main, la baisa,  
 Et de ses pleurs quelque temps l'arrosa.  
 Deux jours après, l'enfant suivit son père.  
 Le deuil fut grand : la trop dolente mère  
 Fit dans l'abord force larmes couler.  
 Mais comme il n'est peine d'âme si forte,  
 Qu'il ne s'en faille à la fin consoler,  
 Deux médecins la traitèrent de sorte  
 Que sa douleur eut un terme assez court ;  
 L'un fut le temps, et l'autre fut l'amour.  
 On épousa Frédéric en grand' pompe ;  
 Non-seulement par obligation,  
 Mais, qui plus est, par inclination.

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But the fame of La Fontaine mainly rests, as every one knows, on his *Fables*, which appeared successively in three collections. The first was published in 1668 ; the second, in 1678 ; while the third, which is considered of unequal

power, consists almost entirely of pieces written for the young Duke of Burgundy, which were not collected till 1694. The happiest efforts of La Fontaine's genius are considered to be embodied in the second book. In endeavoring to versify the subjects of the fables furnished by tradition, the poet did not at first venture beyond the limits of the species as exemplified in Esop. In the first book, we find the *Grasshopper and the Ant*, the *Fox and the Crow*, &c. Each fable is a short story, wound up with a distich or quatrain, containing a moral. At the end of the first book, he has attained the perfection of fable, properly so called, and has succeeded in introducing a high style of poetry, without exceeding the established bounds of this species. In *The Old Man and his Ass*, he is supposed to satirize Malherbe and Racan.

In the second collection, at the seventh book, which opens with the fable of *The Animal Sick of the Plague*, the author confesses that he has departed somewhat from Esop, and extended the circumstances. Here we have *Le Berger et le Roi*, *Le Paysan du Danube*, and others, considered the most beautiful creations of this kind that have ever appeared. Though the subjects of the fables, as of the tales, are borrowed, the dress is entirely new, and show La Fontaine to have possessed in an eminent degree the talent for inventing details.

## LE BERGER ET LE ROI.

Deux démons à leur gré partagent notre vie,  
 Et de son patrimoine ont chassé la raison ;  
 Je ne vois point de cœur qui ne leur sacrifie :  
 Si vous me demandez leur état et leur nom,  
 J'appelle l'un Amour, et l'autre, Ambition.  
 Cette dernière étend le plus loin son empire ;

Car même elle entre dans l'amour.

Je le ferois bien voir ; mais mon but est de dire  
 Comme un roi fit venir un berger à sa cour.

Le conte est du bon temps, non du siècle où nous sommes.



Ce roi vit un troupeau qui couvroit tous les champs,  
Bien broutant, en bon corps, rapportant tous les ans,  
Grace aux soins du berger, de très notables sommes.  
Le berger plut au roi par ces soins diligents.

Tu mérites, dit-il, d'être pasteur de gens :  
Laisse là tes moutons, viens conduire des hommes ;

Je te fais juge souverain.

Voilà notre berger la balance à la main.

Quoiqu'il n'eût guère vu d'autres gens qu'un ermite,  
Son troupeau, ses mâtins, le loup, et puis c'est tout,  
Il avoit du bon sens ; le reste vient ensuite :

Bref, il en vint fort bien à bout.

L'ermite son voisin accourut pour lui dire :

Veillé-je ? et n'est-ce point un songe que je vois ?

Vous, favori ! vous, grand ! Défiez-vous des rois ;

Leur faveur est glissante : on s'y trompe, et le pire

C'est qu'il en coûte cher : de pareilles erreurs

Ne produisent jamais que d'illustres malheurs.

Vous ne connoissez pas l'attrait qui vous engage :

Je vous parle en ami ; craignez tout. L'autre rit ;

Et notre ermite poursuivit :

Voyez combien déjà la cour vous rend peu sage.

Je crois voir cet aveugle à qui, dans un voyage,

Un serpent engourdi de froid

Vient s'offrir sous la main : il le prit pour un fouet ;

Le sien s'étoit perdu, tombant de sa ceinture.

Il rendoit grace au ciel de l'heureuse aventure,

Quand un passant cria : Que tenez-vous ? ô dieux !

Jetez cet animal traître et pernicieux,

Ce serpent !—C'est un fouet.—C'est un serpent ! vous dis-je

A me tant tourmenter quel intérêt m'oblige ?

Prétendez-vous garder ce trésor ?—Pourquoi non ?

Mon fouet étoit usé ; j'en retrouve un fort bon :

Vous n'en parlez que par envie.—

L'aveugle enfin ne le crut pas ;

Il en perdit bientôt la vie :

L'animal dégoûré piqua son homme au bras.

Quant à vous, j'ose vous prédire

Qu'il vous arrivera quelque chose de pire.

—Eh ! que me sauroit-il arriver que la mort ?  
 —Mille dégoûts viendront, dit le prophète ermite.  
 Il en vint en effet : l'ermite n'eut pas tort.  
 Mainte peste de cour fit tant, par maint ressort,  
 Que la candeur du juge, ainsi que son mérite,  
 Furent suspects au prince. On cabale, on suscite  
 Accusateurs, et gens grevés par ses arrêts.  
 De nos biens, dirent-ils, il s'est fait un palais.  
 Le prince voulut voir ces richesses immenses.  
 Il ne trouva partout que médiocrité,  
 Louanges du désert et de la pauvreté :  
     C'étoient là ses magnificences.  
 Son fait, dit-on, consiste en des pierres de prix :  
 Un grand coffre en est plein, fermé de dix serrures.  
 Lui-même ouvrit ce coffre, et rendit bien surpris  
     Tous les machineurs d'impostures.  
 Le coffre étant ouvert, on y vit des lambeaux,  
     L'habit d'un gardeur de troupeaux,  
 Petit chapeau, jupon, panetière, houlette,  
     Et, je pense, aussi sa musette.  
 Doux trésors, ce dit-il, chers gages, qui jamais  
 N'attirâtes sur vous l'envie et le mensonge,  
 Je vous reprends : sortons de ces riches palais  
     Comme l'on sortiroit d'un songe !  
 Sire, pardonnez-moi cette exclamation :  
 J'avois prévu ma chute en montant sur le faîte.  
 Je m'y suis trop complu : mais qui n'a dans la tête  
     Un petit grain d'ambition ?

The versification of La Fontaine constitutes one of the greatest charms of his poetry ; the lines are longer or shorter, not according to any established rule of sequence, but corresponding to the tone of the narrative. In description, or a recital of events which do not rapidly succeed each other, he generally uses the long line of twelve syllables ; but in dialogue, or rapid narration, or when some reflection is thrown in, he employs all metres successively, and without confusion : the Alexandrine, in general, for important matters ; short

verses, for things indifferent; and lines of two syllables, to complete the sense. It does not appear, however, that the poet measured with any degree of nicety the proportion between the thought and the length of the metre. The arrangement seems to have been the result of an instinctive sense of harmony, a delicate taste, and rapidity of invention; sometimes mere caprice; everything except idleness, for it is known, that for a man so fond of sleeping and doing nothing, he really did exert himself when he was at work.

The fables are not liable to the grave objections which lie against the tales of La Fontaine: there is neither indecorum nor immorality about them; though it may be said that the morality he teaches is without any foundation in principle—*La morale moins la vertu*, as the French express it. La Fontaine has been reckoned among the dramatists from his own idea of his fables—"a drama in a hundred acts." Viewing them thus, we should say his little *Théâtre* has been more fortunate than that of his friends: it has never gone out of fashion. There are authors in France more admired, but few more popular; perhaps none so much the familiar genius of every fireside.

He received, less powerfully than any of his contemporaries, the impress of Le Grand Monarque. His morals, though perhaps no worse than those of his neighbors, yet less decently veiled, his neglected toilet and awkward manners, were the ostensible causes of his exclusion from court; and though he joined in the universal pæan of the day to Louis XIV., he received neither invitation nor pension, even after the death of Colbert, to whom the neglect of his merit was at first attributed. Besides the ladies already mentioned, Boileau and Racine were his steady and attached friends; but being both of them men of severe moral and religious principle, they highly disapproved of his complete separation from his wife, and remonstrated with him on its impropriety. With his usual

docility, he admitted that what they said was very true, and declared he would go directly and see her; he would have done it before if he had thought of it. He set out, accordingly, next morning, and returned to Paris the day after. His friends begged to know how he found Madame la Fontaine. "I did not see her," replied the poet. "Not see her!—was she from home?" "Yes, she was gone to prayers, and the servant not knowing me, would not let me stay in the house till she returned." So it proved that the poor poet, shut out of his own house, had repaired to that of a friend, where he had dined, supped, and slept, and from which he started for Paris next morning, without thinking of paying a second visit at home.

It is told, too, that meeting one day at a large dinner-party a young man whose conversation pleased him much, he observed to another of the company that he was a lad of sense and promise. "Why, he is your own son," was the reply. "Ah, I am very glad of it," rejoined the father, with the most perfect indifference. He seems to have been remarkably easy about everything that most nearly concerned him—"a child with a gray beard." The only symptom of literary ambition that he is known to have manifested, was an anxious desire to become a member of the French Academy. A vacancy having occurred by the death of Colbert, he became a candidate; and though the sycophants of the court opposed and denounced him as a mere scribbler of frivolous and licentious tales, yet he was elected in preference to Boileau, the king's historiographer. The royal sanction was necessary to the reception of every candidate elected by the members; and Louis, piqued at the rejection of Boileau for a man whom he disliked, withheld his approval for some months, during which La Fontaine addressed to him a supplicatory ballad, and moreover engaged the interest of Madame de Montespan, the royal mistress, to urge his suit. His majesty did not yield, however, till, on the



occurrence of another vacancy, Boileau was chosen. When this was intimated to the king by a deputation of the members, he replied that every one must approve of this election, and that La Fontaine might now be received. "He has promised to be good," added the monarch.

La Fontaine did indeed write fewer tales after this; but whether because he had "promised to be good" was doubtful. He said himself that the meetings of the Academy amused the hours he had been wont to while away in writing verses.

The humor of his tales, and the singularity of his character, rendered him an object of no small curiosity in his day. It is related that a financier once invited a large party "to meet the celebrated La Fontaine," and the guests came expecting to hear him talk like *Joconde*, and tell stories like the matron of *Ephesus*. But the poet ate and drank, and never opened his mouth for any other purpose. At an early hour he rose to go, saying he had to attend a meeting of the Academy. "You will be too early," said the host; "it is not far." "I'll take the longest way," replied La Fontaine.

Some have alleged that he was habitually dreamy, absent, and stupid in company; and a number of exaggerated anecdotes have been told as exemplifications. But it seems unlikely that his society would have been sought and prized by such men as *Molière*, *Boileau*, and *Racine*, the Princes *Condé* and *Conti*, the *Marquis de Villars*; as well as in the distinguished circles of the *Ladies Bouillon*, *Mazarin*, and *La Sablière*—if there had not been a considerable charm in his conversation as well as his writings. He might have been silent and dull when he found himself brought among strangers to be stared at; but probably in familiar society his peculiarity was nothing more than that extreme simplicity and even childishness for which he was so remarkable, and which, doubtless, had a charm of its own, and occasionally afforded considerable amusement.

If anything took his fancy, he could think of nothing else for the time, and introduced the favorite topic in season and out of season, sometimes comically enough. Racine induced him one day to go to church on the occasion of a high festival; but knowing that the service would be long, and fearing that the poet would fall asleep, or commit some other solecism in church manners, he gave him a small Bible to read. The volume happened to open on the prayer of the Jews in the apocryphal book of Baruk the prophet, and the poet's fancy was riveted. For some time after, his first question to every one he met, from a bishop to a buffoon, was: "Have you read Baruk? Do you know what a genius he was?" Another time, when his head happened to be full of Rabelais, he was in company with the Abbé Boileau, and abruptly asked the grave ecclesiastic whether he thought Rabelais or St. Augustine the cleverest man. His friends Boileau and Racine had the utmost difficulty in dissuading him from dedicating one of the least scrupulous of his tales to M. Arnaud, as a testimony of respect: he could hardly be made to understand that such a tribute would be an insult to the pious Jansenist. No one will be surprised to learn that such a man had neither study nor library. He read and wrote according to opportunity and the whim of the moment; and never dreamed of being provided with any books but those he was immediately using.

La Fontaine's health had been declining for some time: he had never manifested any sense of religion, and the idea of his dying impenitent so appalled the court and the Sorbonne, that Father Poujet, a man of note as a controversialist, was sent to visit him under color of mere civility, and to endeavor to gain his attention to the concerns of eternity. The wily priest conversed for some time on ordinary topics, and then introduced that of religion, with an adroitness quite superfluous in dealing with such a simple soul as La Fontaine. He engaged him in argument, solved his difficulties, silenced

his objections, and, after ten or twelve visits, had him fully persuaded of all the truths deemed essential to his salvation.

But now the poet's condition was becoming alarming, and somewhat more than a mere assent to religious dogmas was necessary to his receiving the rites of the church. Certain reparations and expiations must be made; and the first was, that he should abandon the profits of the edition of his tales then publishing in Holland. This he was ready to concede, but wished to give the proceeds to the poor rather than leave them in the hands of a grasping Dutch bookseller. The priest, however, demonstrated that the wages of iniquity could not be thus offered a sacrifice to Heaven, and the poet meekly yielded this point also. He was next required to burn with his own hands a manuscript opera which he had intended to bring out. This, too, after some hesitation was done. The last and hardest condition, long resisted and disputed, was that he should publicly ask pardon of God and of the church for having scandalized both by the publication of his tales. In vain the attendant nurse begged of the reverend fathers not to torment him, and pleaded that it was "not perverseness in him, but stupidity, poor soul!" They persevered, gained their point, and called in a deputation of the Academy to witness the declaration that the volume of tales "was an abominable book, which he was sorry for having written, and of which he would never countenance or promote the further circulation."

The conversion of La Fontaine produced the highest satisfaction at court. Father Poujet's fortune was made; he immediately obtained church preferment, and became a fashionable confessor. Moreover, as it was deemed "unreasonable that La Fontaine should be the poorer for having done his duty," a sum equal to what he would probably have received for his tales was sent to him in the name of the young Duke of Burgundy. He lived about two years longer, began to trans-

late the church hymns, and, it is believed, wrote some more tales in spite of his vow. He died in 1695, in the seventy-fourth year of his age; and it was found, upon undressing the lifeless body, that he had been mortifying himself in a shirt of sackcloth. He was buried by the side of Molière, in the cemetery of St. Joseph, at Paris. The apartment in which he spent his last days, at the house of Madame d'Herbart, was visited as an object of interest for many years.

La Fontaine's best epitaph is the following, written by himself:—

Jean s'en alla comme il était venu,  
Mangeant son fonds après son revenu,  
Croyant le bien chose peu nécessaire.  
Quant à son temps bien le sut dépenser,  
Deux parts en fit, dont il voulait passer—  
L'une à dormir, et l'autre à ne rien faire.

France has produced numerous writers of fables and apoloques since the time of La Fontaine, but none worthy of comparison with him. Gay, the English fabulist,

“In wit, a man—simplicity, a child,”

as Pope says, appears to have borne a striking resemblance to him in personal character, and his fables are reckoned the nearest to his in merit; but the wit, satire, party-spirit, and pointed style of Gay, impressed on his works a very different character from the easy, graceful negligence of the French poet.\*

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\* Critics have applied to the style of La Fontaine the words which he uses in speaking of Venus,

“Sa grace encor plus belle que la beauté.”

They have also found in his description of Night a beautiful picture of his intellectual life.

“Pas de calmes vapeurs mollement soutenue,  
La tête sur son bras, et son bras sur la nue,  
Laisant tomber des fleurs, et ne les semant pas.”



## XIV.—SATIRICAL, MOCK-HEROIC, AND OTHER POETRY.

BOILEAU, HIS EARLY LIFE—SATIRES—ART OF POETRY—THE LUTRIN—EPIS-  
TLES—ANECDOTES—HIS DEATH—NARROW SPHERE OF POETRY—MADAME  
DESHOULIERES.

THE writings of Descartes and Pascal, with the precepts of the French Academy and the Port Royalists, had established the art of prose composition; but the destiny of poetry continued doubtful, even after the appearance of Corneille's master-pieces; for though these afforded models in one department, they were too peculiar to convey any definite idea of what poetry ought to be. There was no specific doctrine on the subject. To supply this was the mission of Boileau, and he fulfilled it, first by satirizing the existing fashions in poetry, and then by composing *an Art of Poetry* after the manner of Horace.

NICHOLAS BOILEAU,\* called by his contemporaries DESPREAUX, to distinguish him from his brothers, was born in or near Paris in 1636, the son of Giles Boileau, who was for sixty years *greffier* (clerk or recorder) to the great chamber of the parliament of Paris. There was a large family, of whom three distinguished themselves in literature. The mother died during the infancy of Despréaux, and the father when he was sixteen. His childhood was one of great physical suffering; but it seems not then to have produced that irritability which was afterwards attributed to it; his disposition as a child was simple and kindly, so that the elder Boileau used to say: "Colin was a good fellow, who would never speak ill of anybody."

After the death of his father, his relations induced him to study the law, and he was admitted to the bar at an early

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\* See Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia.

age; but the chicanery and tortuosity of the profession speedily disgusted him, and, besides, the books of Accursius and Alciati were little likely to interest the disciple of Horace and Juvenal. He therefore deserted what his biographers call *l'entre de la chicane*, and determined to study theology. But finding that scholastic divinity had its tricks and quirks as well as law, and declaring that chicanery had only changed her garb to allure him more cunningly, he renounced the Sorbonne, and applied himself entirely to the study of the belles-lettres.

We have already alluded (sec. vii.) to the various styles of poetry cultivated by Voiture, Ménage, Chapelain, Scudéry, Benserade, and others, for the amusement of the court circle. Nothing had as yet appeared effectually to counteract the false taste which relished such compositions, except the tragedies of Corneille and the comedies of Molière. These had, indeed, commanded a high reputation, but Chapelain was still the oracle of light literature, and not only enjoyed a royal pension, but was intrusted by Colbert with the task of furnishing a list of the names of those who ought to be deemed worthy of receiving literary rewards from Louis XIV. Most of the poets who then enjoyed the highest celebrity, however now forgotten, belonged to the same school, for such as Racine and La Fontaine were at this time but *débutants* in the literary world. "In the midst of men who made verses for the sake of making them, and composed languishing love-songs upon the perfections of mistresses who never existed except in their own imaginations, Boileau determined to write nothing but what interested his feelings; to break with this affected gallantry, and draw poetry only from the depths of his own heart." It would seem as if searching there for thoughts and feelings to express in verse, what he chiefly found was burning indignation that men, who ought to be the standards of correct taste, persisted in writing such trash. His own début, accordingly, was made in unmerciful satires on the works of these

poetasters. Every Frenchman is familiar with the verses in which he ridicules the fictitious gallantries which occupied most of the poetry of his time.

Faudra-t-il, de sang-froid et sans être amoureux  
Pour quelque Iris en l'air faire le langoureux,  
Lui prodiguer les noms de Soleil et d'Aurore,  
Et toujours bien mangeant, mourir par métaphore ?

The *Pucelle* of Chapelain also came in for its share. In an evil hour, this worthy man had believed himself capable of writing an heroic epic, and had chosen the Maid of Orleans as the theme. During the twenty years he was composing it, he had enjoyed a high degree of anticipated reputation from the popularity of the subject, and the merit of some detached passages which obtained publicity. But when it appeared entire, the general disappointment was severe in proportion. Its style may be judged from the following lines. The Maid is represented as thus addressing the king :—

O ! grand prince, que grand des cette heure j'appelle,  
Il est vrai, le respect sert de bride à mon zèle :  
Mais ton illustre aspect me redouble le cœur,  
Et me le redoublant, me redouble la peur.  
A ton illustre aspect mon cœur se sollicite,  
Et grim pant contre mont, la dure terre quitte.  
O ! que n'ai-je le ton desormais assez fort  
Pour aspirer à toi, sans te faire de tort.  
Pour toi puissé-je avoir une mortelle pointe  
Vers où l'épaule gauche à la gorge est conjointe,  
Que le coup brisat l'os, et fit pleûvoir le sang  
De la temple, du dos, de l'épaule, et du flanc.

Boileau was not the first to ridicule this unfortunate epic : a host of epigrams had already appeared against it ; but his well-pointed sarcasms brought up the rear, and completed the ruin of Chapelain's poetical reputation, so that one of his best

friends was obliged to say: "If he followed my advice, he would never write poetry."

Boileau continued to plead the cause of reason against rhyme, of true poetry against false, and maintained that he was only the mouthpiece of the wise public who said nothing, against the fashionable public who had many voices. But the thing was not to be borne, that the son of a *greffier*, a young man having no claims to be a public censor, except his four-and-twenty years, and his mortal hatred of whatever he was pleased to call a foolish book, should dare to asperse the poets of the court of Louis XIV., and cast an imputation on those who distributed the king's bounty. The Duke of Montauzier, the son-in-law of the celebrated Madame de Rambouillet, who, it will be remembered, was the goddess of the clique which established the system of factitious gallantry ridiculed by Boileau—took upon himself to be furious, and declared that Boileau ought to be tossed into the river, and allowed to rhyme there. Some of the poets answered in verse, and received versified answers to their complaints. Meanwhile, despite the anger both of the poets and their patrons, Boileau's satires, which, however, were still unpublished, enjoyed immense favor, and he became the welcome guest of the best society in Paris. To the talent for writing verse with singular elegance, he added that of reading it well, and possessed, besides, considerable power of mimicry, which contributed much to the zest of his recitations. The great Prince Condé, who greatly preferred literary to merely aristocratic society, became his special protector, and invited him to his réunions at Chantilly. Arnaud and Nicole, the Port Royalists, were among his most revered friends; while Racine, La Fontaine, Molière, and Chapelle, were his intimate companions. The personal character of Boileau reflected unfavorably on the contemptible morals of the poetasters, as his satires had rendered their works ridiculous. In the midst of buffoons and libertines, he



maintained the correct manners of the recluses of Port Royal, with the easy enjoyment of social life.

Notwithstanding the high ground on which he thus stood, he refrained for a considerable time from publishing those satires which had gained him so much popularity. But individuals who had heard him recite his verses, repeated them to others, and many of them, from their appositeness and felicity of expression, had passed into proverbs; and now the booksellers had got hold of imperfect copies, transcribed from memory, and had printed them for their own advantage. The sensitive ear of the author was shocked at the inaccuracies which had crept in as the result of this loose mode of publication; and he was thus induced to bring them out himself. He accordingly published seven satires (1666), preceded by an address to the king, and a preface to the public. The former, however full of praise, was, it would seem, but the echo of the general voice of the French nation, and had been, it is even now admitted, fairly earned by the sovereign. In the latter, he apologizes for the publication as a measure of self-defence; bids the authors whom he criticises remember that Parnassus was at all times a free country; invites them to criticise his works in their turn; and comforts them with the reflection, that if their compositions are bad, they deserve his censure, and if good, they will not be injured by it.

About the same time, he used to recite his *Dialogues des Héros de Roman*—a little work in the style of Lucian's *Dialogues*, in which he turned into ridicule the loves of Cyrus and Clélie in the novels of Mademoiselle de Scudéry. This satire was the more lively, as these romances had in his youth appeared to him, as to all the rest of the world, among the finest productions in the language. But he absolutely refused even to put this work on paper during the lifetime of the lady, for whose personal character he had the highest respect; and here be it told, that Boileau knew well how to distinguish

between authors and their works, and was ready to meet them with cordiality when he found them willing so far to pardon him. In such case he used to say he had the greater merit, according to the proverb, that "the injured may forgive, but the injurer never." Madame de Sévigné used to say of him, that he was "cruel only in verse;" and not a few of those who had read his satires were surprised to find him frank and gentle in company, his conversation being, as he himself expressed it, without either claws or nails. Two more satires appeared in the following year.

The battle was now gained: the king had declared himself for the new poets against the old; and Boileau sheathed the sword for five years, and consolidated his victory by writing the *Art of Poetry*. Having held up to ridicule the prevalent faults of the literature of his time, he applied himself to the less ungracious task of laying down rules to restrain the vagrant imaginations of the poets, to restore poetry to its true dignity, and raise the condition of the poet. His fundamental doctrine was, that "reason is the soul of writing, and truth its only object."

Aimez-vous la raison; que toujours vos écrits  
Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix;  
Rien n'est beau que le vrai; le vrai seul est aimable.

The various rules which he lays down are but particular applications of this great principle in the various kinds of composition. It was thus that Boileau fulfilled the mission of the "Legislator of Parnassus," a title which was accorded to him by the unanimous voice of his age.

The doctrines thus established were somewhat more than the work of one superior genius. They were the literary creed of the greatest poets then living, and had been, it is believed, carefully discussed with Molière, Racine, La Fontaine, and Chapelle, who used to sup together two or three times a week

at the lodgings of Boileau. At these literary meetings, there was an infliction attached to every breach of the rules which its members had laid down for themselves. It consisted of reading so many lines of the *Pucelle* of Chapelain: to read a whole page of it was the extreme penalty of the law.

The labor connected with the *Art of Poetry* was relieved by the ingenious pleasantry of the *Lutrin*, which originated in the following manner:—

An argument having turned upon epic poetry, Boileau had maintained that the excellence of a heroic depended on the power of its inventor to sustain and enlarge upon a slender groundwork. A frivolous dispute afterwards arising between the treasurer and the chanter of the cathedral concerning the placing of a reading desk (*lutrin*), M. de Lamoignon, the reverend friend of Boileau, playfully challenged him to write a heroic poem on the subject if he would verify his own theory. Such was the occasion of this mock-heroic, considered the happiest effort of his muse, though admitted even by his own countrymen to be inferior to Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, which is a composition of similar kind.

The slender groundwork was, that the cumbrous old-fashioned desk entirely hid the chanter, who therefore removed it; and this excited the wrath of the treasurer, his superior, who replaced it; whereupon the whole chapter entered into the quarrel, which was appeased only by the interference of the president, M. de Lamoignon. The poem begins with a spirited exordium:—

Je chante les combats, et ce Prélat terrible,  
 Qui par ses longs travaux, et sa force invincible,  
 Dans une illustre Eglise exerçant son grand cœur,  
 Fit placer à la fin un Lutrin dans le chœur.  
 C'est en vain que le chantre abusant d'un faux titre,  
 Deux fois l'en fit ôter par les mains du chapitre;  
 Ce Prélat sur le banc de son rival altier,  
 Deux fois le reportant, l'en couvrit tout entier.

It proceeds to describe the peace and prosperity of the Chapel-Royal at Paris :—

Parmi les doux plaisirs d'une paix fraternelle,  
Paris voyoit fleurir son antique chapelle.  
Ses chanoines vermeils et brillant de santé  
S'engraissoient d'une longue et sainte oisiveté.  
Sans sortir de leurs lits, plus doux que leurs hermines,  
Ces pieux fainéans faisoient chanter matines ;  
Veilloient à bien diner, et laissoient en leur lieu,  
A des chantres gagés le soin de louer Dieu.

But Discord is indignant at witnessing this repose :—

Quand la Discorde, encore toute noire de crimes,  
Sortant des Cordeliers pour aller aux Minimes ;  
Avec cet air hideux qui fait frémir la paix,  
S'arrêta près d'un arbre, au pied de son palais.  
Là, d'un œil attentif contemplant son empire,  
A l'aspect du tumulte elle-même s'admire.

And now, taking the form of an old chanter, she goes to the treasurer, who is a bishop, resolved to excite him to contention. The prelate is thus described :—

Dans le réduit d'une alcove enfoncée,  
S'élève un lit de plume à grands frais amassée,  
Quatre rideaux pompeux, par un double contour,  
En defendent l'entrée à la clarté du jour.  
Là, parmi les douceurs d'un tranquille silence,  
Règne sur le duvet une heureuse indolence.  
C'est là que le Prélât, muni d'un déjeûner,  
Dormant d'un léger somme, attendait le diner.  
La jeunesse en sa fleur brille sur son visage,  
Son menton sur son sein descend à double étage ;  
Et son corps ramassé dans sa courte grosseur,  
Fait gémir les coussins sous sa molle épaisseur.

Discord now applies himself to the work of mischief :—



La déesse en entrant, qui voit la nappe mise,  
 Admire un si bel ordre, et reconnoît l'église ;  
 Et marchant à grands pas vers le lieu de repos,  
 Au Prélat sommeillant elle adresse ces mots :  
 "Tu dors, Prélat, tu dors ? et là-haut à ta place,  
 Le chantre aux yeux du chœur étale son audace :  
 Chante les *oremus*, fait des processions,  
 Et répand à grands flots les bénédictions.  
 Tu dors ? attends-tu donc que, sans bulle et sans titre,  
 Il te ravisse encore le rochet et la mitre ?  
 Sors de ce lit oiseux, qui te tient attaché  
 Et renonce au repos, ou bien à l'évêché."

The prelate rises full of wrath and resolution, and would have summoned the chapter even before dinner, but Gilotin, his almoner, remonstrates against this display of heroism :—

Quelle fureur, dit-il, quel aveugle caprice,  
 Quand le diner est prêt, vous appelle à l'office ?  
 De votre dignité soutenez mieux l'éclat :  
 Est-ce pour travailler que vous êtes prélat ?  
 A quoi bon ce dégoût et ce zèle inutile ;  
 Est-il donc pour jeûner quatre temps ou vigile ?  
 Reprenez vos esprits, et souvenez-vous bien,  
 Qu'un diner réchauffé ne valut jamais rien.  
 Ainsi dit Gilotin, et ce ministre sage  
 Sur table, au même instant, fait servir le potage.  
 Le Prélat voit la soupe, et plein d'un saint respect,  
 Demeure quelque temps muet à cet aspect.  
 Il cède—il dine enfin.

The chapter being afterwards assembled, the bishop complains, in tears, of the presumption of the chanter ; and Sidrac, the Nestor of the chapter, suggests a mode of humbling him. Here a description of this famous reading-desk is introduced :—

Vers cet endroit du chœur où le chantre orgueilleux,  
 Montre, assis à ta gauche, un front si sourcilleux ;  
 Sur ce rang d'ais serrés qui forment sa clôture,  
 Fut jadis un lutrin d'inégale structure,

Dont les flancs élargis, de leur vaste contour  
 Ombragoient pleinement tous les lieux d'alentour.  
 Derrière ce lutrin, ainsi qu'au fond d'un antre,  
 A peine sur son banc, on discernait le chantre.  
 Tandis qu'à l'autre banc le Prélat radieux,  
 Découvert à grand jour, attiroit tous les yeux.  
 Mais un démon, fatal à cette ample machine,  
 Soit qu'une main la nuit eût hâté sa ruine,  
 Soit qu'ainsi de tout tems l'ordonnât le destin,  
 Fit tomber à nos yeux le pupitre un matin.  
 J'eus beau prendre le ciel et le chantre à partie :  
 Il fallut l'emporter dans notre sacristie,  
 Où depuis trente hivers sans gloire enseveli,  
 Il languit tout poudreux dans un honteux oubli.  
 Entends-moi donc, Prélat. Dès que l'ombre tranquille  
 Viendra d'un crêpe noir envelopper la ville,  
 Il faut que trois de nous, sans tumulte et sans bruit,  
 Partent à la faveur de la naissante nuit ;  
 Et du lutrin rompu réunissant la masse,  
 Aillent d'un zèle adroit le remettre à sa place.  
 Si le chantre demain ose le renverser,  
 Alors de cent arrêts tu peux le terrasser.  
 Pour soutenir tes droits, que le ciel autorise,  
 Abîme tout plutôt, c'est l'esprit de l'église.  
 C'est par là qu'un prélat signale la vigueur.  
 Ne borne pas ta gloire à prier dans le chœur :  
 Ces vertus dans Aleth peuvent être en usage,  
 Mais dans Paris, plaidons : c'est-là notre partage.

This advice is eagerly adopted ; and lots having been cast, three are selected for its performance. Brontin comes first ; then L'Amour, a hair-dresser ; and lastly, Boirude, the sacristan. The chapter is satisfied with the choice, and

Le Prélat, resté seul, calme un peu son dépit,  
 Et jusqu'au souper se couche et s'assoupit.

In the commencement of the second book, is a scene of remonstrance and reproach between the wigmaker and his wife, travestied on the parting of Æneas and Dido. But

though those portions of the poem which are parodies on the ancient epics are replete with wit, yet they are less pleasing than those strictly original. Towards the end of the second book, Discord observes the three adventurers hastening towards the tower where the *lutrin* is hid. Their joyful shout awakens Indolence :—

L'air qui gémit du cri de l'horrible déesse,  
 Va jusques dans Citeaux réveiller la Mollesse.  
 C'est là qu'en un dortoir elle fait son séjour.  
 Les Plaisirs nonchalans folâtaient à l'entour.  
 L'un pâtrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des chanoines,  
 L'autre broie en riant le vermillon des moines ;  
 La Volupté la sert avec des yeux dévots,  
 Et toujours le Sommeil lui verse des pavots.  
 Ce soir plus que jamais, en vain il les redouble,  
 La Mollesse à ce bruit se réveille, se trouble.

Night enters, and alarms her still more by announcing, that on the morrow the *lutrin* is to appear in the chapel, a signal for mutiny and war. Indolence drops a tear, opens one eye, and utters a feeble complaint :—

O Nuit, que m'as tu dit ? Quel démon sur la terre  
 Souffle dans tous les cœurs la fatigue et la guerre ?  
 Hélas ! qu'est devenu ce temps, cet heureux temps,  
 Où les rois s'honoraient du nom de fainéans,  
 S'endormoient sur le trône, et me servant sans honte,  
 Laissoient leur sceptre aux mains ou d'un maire ou d'un comte.  
 Aucun soin n'approchait de leur paisible cour,  
 On reposait la nuit, on dormait tout le jour.

\* \* \* \*

Ce doux siècle n'est plus ! le ciel impitoyable,  
 A placé sur le trône un prince infatigable.  
 Il brave mes douceurs, il est sourd à ma voix.  
 Tous les jours il m'éveille au bruit de ses exploits ;  
 Rien ne peut arrêter sa vigilante audace,  
 L'été n'a point de feux, l'hiver n'a point de glace.  
 J'entends à son seul nom mes sujets frémir,  
 En vain deux fois la Paix a voulu l'endormir :

Loin de moi son courage, entraîné par la gloire,  
Ne se plait qu'à courir de victoire en victoire.

This episode is considered the jewel of the whole poem. In the third canto, the adventurous trio enter the sacristy to seize the lutrin, but Night has brought and hid in it an owl, whose sudden appearance terrifies the heroes, and they are about to fly. Discord rallies them; they pursue the adventure, carry off the desk in triumph, and reinstate it before the seat of the chanter. The fourth book relates the discovery, the resolution of the enraged chanter to destroy the desk, the indignation of the whole chapter; and finally, the destruction of the lutrin, which is carried off piecemeal. The poem at first consisted only of these four books; but the author was induced to continue it. The fifth book describes the meeting of the hostile parties. The prelate and chanter, each rushing to the chapel, meet near the shop of Barbin, the bookseller. They eye each other with mutual rage; a friend of the chanter seizes a ponderous volume—the *Great Cyrus* of Mademoiselle de Scudéry—and hurls it at Boirude, who avoids the blow, and the tremendous tome strikes poor old Sidrac to the ground. A general battle ensues; they rush into the shop, dismantle the shelves, and fling the volumes at each other. The naming of these books affords opportunity for satirical allusions to contemporary authors, many of whom are so entirely forgotten that the point of the sarcasms cannot be appreciated. The party of the chanter gains the ascendant, but the bishop, by a happy stratagem, escapes personal danger:—

Au spectacle étonnant de leur chute imprévue,  
Le Prélat pousse un cri qui pénètre la nue.  
Il maudit dans son cœur le démon des combats,  
Et de l'horreur du coup il recule six pas.  
Mais bientôt rappelant son antique prouesse,  
Il tire du manteau sa dextre vengeresse;  
Il part, et ses doigts saintement alongés,  
Bénit tous les passans en deux files rangés.



Il sait que l'ennemi, que ce coup va surprendre,  
 Désormais sur ses pieds ne l'oseroit attendre,  
 Et déjà voit pour lui tout le peuple en courroux,  
 Crier aux combattans : Profanes, à genoux.  
 Le chantre, qui de loin voit approcher l'orage,  
 Dans son cœur éperdu cherche en vain du courage.  
 Sa fierté l'abandonne, il tremble, il cède, il fuit ;  
 Le long des sacrés murs sa brigade le suit.  
 Tout s'écarte à l'instant, mais aucun n'en réchappe,  
 Partout le doigt vainqueur les suit et les ratrape.  
 Evrard seul, en un coin prudemment retiré,  
 Se croyoit à couvert de l'insulte sacré.  
 Mais le Prélat vers lui fait une marche adroite :  
 Il observe de l'œil, et tirant vers la droite,  
 Tout d'un coup tourne à gauche, et d'un bras fortuné,  
 Bénit subitement le guerrier consterné.  
 Le chanoine, surpris de la foudre mortelle,  
 Se dresse, et lève en vain une tête rebelle :  
 Sur ses genoux tremblans il tombe à cet aspect,  
 Et donne à la frayeur ce qu'il doit au respect.

The sixth book describes the arrival of Piety, Faith, and Grace, who awaken Aristus (M. de Lamoignon), and through his interference, peace is restored.

Madame de Thianges, sister of Madame de Montespan, was so struck with the eulogy of Louis XIV., which the poet puts in the mouth of Indolence, that she read it to the king while it was still in manuscript. Boileau was invited to court, and at once received a pension.

Among the literary plans concocted between Boileau and Racine, was the institution of an academy, composed of a very few individuals, who were to write short inscriptions for the medals struck by Louis XIV. to celebrate the great events of his reign. Madame de Montespan suggested that such records must be very inadequate, and that a regular history should be compiled. Madame de Maintenon added the proposal, that Boileau and Racine should be appointed joint historiographers,

and the two friends renounced poetry for a time, to prosecute the studies necessary to qualify them for the work before them. The following year, they accompanied the king to the siege of Gand, to the no small amusement of the court circle, and displayed the expected amount of ignorance as to all the arrangements necessary for such an expedition, with a docile credulousness, of which their military friends availed themselves to enjoy a little mirth at their expense. Boileau's health prevented him from following any other campaign; and as there remains but a fragmentary relic of their work, it is not known to what extent it proceeded. When they had written any details they thought likely to interest their royal master, they used to read them to him in the apartments of Madame de Montespan, Madame de Maintenon also being generally present.

The best of Boileau's *epistles* were written about this time; and French critics maintain, that though he must be confessed inferior to Horace in his satires, he has surpassed him in many of his epistles. He afterwards returned to satire, but his later pieces of this kind are reckoned very inferior to his earlier ones. Nor is he considered to have equalled himself in his *Ode sur la Prise de Namur*, occasioned by a controversy on the merits of the ancient poets. Pity an author should not know when to stop.

Boileau had entertained some fear that by receiving the bounty of the king he might be bartering the privilege of telling him the truth; but it would seem not to have proved so. It is well known that when Louis was making search for Arnaud to commit him to the Bastille, "Le roi est trop heureux pour le trouver," said the poet to one of the officers. Nor only did he with design maintain a free and manly bearing, but sometimes, through absence of mind, made blunders which shocked even Racine. Conversing one day with Madame de Maintenon on the now subsiding rage for vulgar burlesque poetry, he said that "happily this vile taste had passed away,

and Scarron was no longer read even in the provinces." Racine afterwards asked him whether he did not know of the lady's near relationship to Scarron.\* "Alas, no!" replied Boileau; "but it is the first thing I forget when I am in her company."

Two anecdotes mentioned by all the biographers of Boileau prove that the inexorable satirist had a generous heart. Patru, the celebrated advocate, had ruined himself by his passion for literature, and was reduced to the necessity of selling his valuable library. He had almost agreed to part with it for a moderate sum, when Boileau offered a higher, and after paying the money, added this condition to the purchase, that Patru should retain possession of it for his life. Again: when it was rumored at court that the king intended to retrench the pension of Corneille, Boileau hastened to Madame Montespan, and represented that it would be most unjust to grant a pension to an author like himself just ascending the Mount Parnassus, and withdraw it from Corneille, who had been so long seated on the summit; he entreated, therefore, for the honor of the king, that his own name should be struck off the pension-list rather than that of Corneille. This magnanimous intercession was crowned with the success it deserved.

As Boileau advanced in years, he became more recluse in his habits. The taste which he had had in earlier life for social and convivial pleasures, subsided into a sort of easy indolence, enlivened by the pleasures of intimate friendship. His attachment to Racine seems to have been the warmest and most enduring of his feelings, and the dying farewell of the tragedian is the most expressive eulogy of the private character of the satirist. "*Je regarde comme mon bonheur pour moi de mourir avant vous.*" A few days after Racine's death, Boileau appeared at court for the last time, to take the king's

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\* See page 294.

commands with regard to the prosecution of the history. When urged by his friends not to withdraw himself entirely, he said: "What should I do there? I cannot flatter." By this time, then (1698), it would seem that Louis, intoxicated with the praise which had formerly been the willing tribute of a gratified nation, had begun to require it even where it was not considered due. Louis Racine, the son of the poet, to whom we are chiefly indebted for what we know of Boileau's declining years, used to visit him frequently, and play with him at nine-pins. The old man said one day, that it must be confessed he possessed two talents equally useful to his country—he could play well at nine-pins and make verses. At this time he congratulated himself on the purity of his works. "It is," he said, "a great consolation to a poet who must die soon, to think that he has never written anything injurious to virtue."

His last days were employed in correcting a complete edition of his works, which were now to include the *Dialogue on the Romances*, as well as the *Satires*, *Epistles*, and *Epigrams*; the *Art of Poetry*; *A Dialogue on Poetry and Music*; and a translation of Longinus's *Treatise on the Sublime*, with critical remarks. An *Epistle to Ambiguity*, which embodied an exposure of the Jesuits, was also to have been added; but the king, at the instance of his confessor, forbade its appearance, and required that the manuscript should be delivered to him. Boileau disdained to temporize, and chose to suppress the whole edition rather than exclude this to satisfy the Jesuits.

He retained his literary tastes to the last. When he was asked how he felt, he replied by a line from Malherbe—

"Je suis vaincu du temps, je cède à ses outrages."

As he was expiring, he grasped the hand of M. Coutard, and said: "Bon jour, et adieu—c'est un long adieu." He died of dropsy in the chest (1711), in his seventy-fifth year, the last of the great poets of the golden age. His remains



were interred in the vault of the Sainte-Chapelle, immediately under the spot where stood the *lutrin* which he had immortalized.

The following is the opening of the *Art of Poetry* :—

PREMIER CHANT DE L'ART POÉTIQUE.

C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur  
Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur :  
S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète,  
Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète,  
Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif ;  
Pour lui Phébus est sourd, et Pégase est rétif.

O vous donc qui, brûlant d'une ardeur périlleuse,  
Courez du bel esprit la carrière épineuse,  
N'allez pas sur des vers sans fruit vous consumer,  
Ni prendre pour génie un amour de rimer.  
Craignez d'un vain plaisir les trompeuses amorces,  
Et consultez longtemps votre esprit et vos forces.

La nature, fertile en esprits excellents,  
Sait entre les auteurs partager les talents :  
L'un peut tracer en vers une amoureuse flamme,  
L'autre d'un trait plaisant aiguïser l'épigramme.  
Malherbe d'un héros peut vanter les exploits ;  
Racan chanter Philis, les bergers et les bois.  
Mais souvent un esprit qui se flatte et qui s'aime,  
Méconnaît son génie, et s'ignore soi-même.  
Ainsi tel autrefois qu'on vit avec Faret  
Charbonner de ses vers les murs d'un cabaret,  
S'en va mal à propos, d'une voix insolente,  
Chanter du peuple hébreu la fuite triomphante,  
Et, poursuivant Moïse au travers des déserts,  
Court avec Pharaon se noyer dans les mers.

Quelque sujet qu'on traite, ou plaisant ou sublime,  
Que toujours le bon sens s'accorde avec la rime.  
L'un l'autre vainement ils semblent se haïr ;  
La rime est une esclave et ne doit qu'obéir.  
Lorsque à la bien chercher d'abord on s'évertue,  
L'esprit à la trouver aisément s'habitue ;

Au joug de la raison sans peine elle fléchit,  
 Et, loin de la gêner, la sert et l'enrichit.  
 Mais, lorsqu'on la néglige, elle devient rebelle,  
 Et pour la rattraper le sens court après elle.  
 Aimez donc la raison. Que toujours vos écrits  
 Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix.

La plupart, emportés d'une fougue insensée,  
 Toujours loin du droit sens vont chercher leur pensée.  
 Ils croiraient s'abaisser, dans leurs vers monstrueux,  
 S'ils pensaient ce qu'un autre a pu penser comme eux.  
 Evitons ces excès. Laissons à l'Italie  
 De tous ces faux brillants l'éclatante folie.  
 Tout doit tendre au bon sens ; mais pour y parvenir,  
 Le chemin est glissant et pénible à tenir ;  
 Pour peu qu'on s'en écarte, aussitôt on se noie.  
 Le raison pour marcher n'a souvent qu'une voie.

Un auteur quelquefois, trop plein de son objet,  
 Jamais sans l'épuiser n'abandonne un sujet.  
 S'il rencontre un palais, il m'en dépeint la face ;  
 Il me promène après de terrasse en terrasse ;  
 Ici s'offre un perron ; là règne un corridor ;  
 Là ce balcon s'enferme en un balustre d'or.  
 Il compte des plafonds les ronds et les ovales ;  
 " Ce ne sont que festons, ce ne sont qu'astragales."  
 Je saute vingt feuillets pour en trouver la fin,  
 Et je me sauve à peine au travers du jardin.  
 Fuyez de ces auteurs l'abondance stérile,  
 Et ne vous chargez point d'un détail inutile.  
 Tout ce qu'on dit de trop est fade et rebutant ;  
 L'esprit rassasié le rejette à l'instant.  
 Qui ne sait se borner ne sut jamais écrire.

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Durant les premiers ans du Parnasse françois,  
 Le caprice tout seul faisait toutes les lois.  
 La rime, au bout des mots assemblés sans mesure,  
 Tenait lieu d'ornements, de nombre et de césure.  
 Villon sut le premier, dans ces siècles grossiers,  
 Débrouiller l'art confus de nos vieux romanciers.

Marot bientôt après fit fleurir les ballades,  
 Tourna des triolets, rima des mascarades,  
 A des refrains réglés asservit les rondeaux,  
 Et montra pour rimer des chemins tout nouveaux.  
 Ronsard, qui le suivit, par une autre méthode,  
 Réglant tout, brouilla tout, fit un art à sa mode,  
 Et toutefois longtemps eut un heureux destin.  
 Mais sa muse, en français parlant grec et latin,  
 Vit dans l'âge suivant, par un retour grotesque,  
 Tomber de ses grands mots le faste pédantesque.  
 Ce poëte orgueilleux, trébuché de si haut,  
 Rendit plus retenus Desportes et Bertaut.  
 Enfin Malherbe vint ; et, le premier en France,  
 Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence,  
 D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir,  
 Et réduisit la muse aux règles du devoir.  
 Par ce sage écrivain la langue réparée  
 N'offrit plus rien de rude à l'oreille épurée.  
 Les stances avec grâce apprirent à tomber ;  
 Et le vers sur le vers n'osa plus enjamber.  
 Tout reconnut ses lois ; et ce guide fidèle  
 Aux auteurs de ce temps sert encor de modèle.  
 Marchez donc sur ses pas ; aimez sa pureté,  
 Et de son tour heureux imitez la clarté.  
 Si le sens de vos vers tarde à se faire entendre,  
 Mon esprit aussitôt commence à se détendre,  
 Et, de vos vains discours prompt à se détacher,  
 Ne suit point un auteur qu'il faut toujours chercher.

There is no other poetry of this period worthy to detain us. If we inquire for the lyric muse, it is to be found in the choruses of Racine's *Esther* and *Athalie*, and in some of La Fontaine's minor pieces, especially the touching elegy *Aux Nymphes de Vaux*, occasioned by the disgrace of Fouquet.

The horizon of the poets, it must be observed, was somewhat circumscribed. Attracted to the capital, and confined to the conventional life of the court and city, they enjoyed little opportunity for the contemplation of nature ; while, on the

other hand, the policy of Louis XIV. proscribed national recollections; so that social life, and that of their own time alone, was open to them. Poetry thus became either abstract and ideal, or limited to the delineation of those passions which belong to a highly artificial state of society.

MADAME DESHOULIERES, indeed, wrote some graceful idyls, but she by no means entered into the spirit of rural life and manners like La Fontaine, or even old RACAN (1589—1670), who scarcely belonged to this generation. There are before us two of Madame Deshoulières' pieces,\* in which she shows herself much more at home than among shepherds and shepherdesses.† In the first, she is depicting the annoyances of a literary lion.

Ah! think, my friend, how onerous is fame!  
 You call to pay a visit—at your name  
 The whole assembly changes tone and looks:  
     “Here comes an author,” now they cry;  
     “Let language take a lofty range:”  
 And in a manner, stiff and strange,  
 Their *precious* syllables they try.  
 They bore you all the while about new books,  
 Ask your opinion, too, about your own,  
 And beg the favor of a recitation:  
 When, if you give the first in simple tone,  
 Or speak the other with shy hesitation,  
 The whisper will run round: “A *bel esprit*?  
     Why, she talks like another—you or me!  
 Calls herself an author, and none grander,  
 While any one with ears can understand her!”

In the second, she is addressing Père la Chaise, the king's confessor, on the hypocrisy which had become fashionable

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\* Translated in the Foreign Quarterly Review.

† She was so fascinated with pastoral life, that, as it is said, she expressed the wish that she had been a sheep, instead of a woman.



through the piety of Madame de Maintenon and other court devotees. Supposing herself invited to assume this mask in order to engage the regard of the king, she indignantly exclaims :—

Devotion! No! Hypocrisy is made  
By beggared debauchees their safest trade;  
By women from whom Time hath stolen all charm,  
Or scandal on their name breathed fatal harm:  
Let these alone, bereft of merit, try  
To put on Bigotry's deceitful eye:  
All is forgotten—all is varnished o'er—  
And taint, or crime, or folly seen no more.  
Oh, that I could some deep dark colors find  
To paint the blackness of the treacherous mind!  
How I, who hate all falsehood, e'en the streak  
Of simulated red rouged o'er the cheek,  
Must more detest the gloss o'er manners thrown,  
And hate all forms that are not Nature's own!

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#### XV.—ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT AND BAR.

INFLUENCE OF LOUIS XIV. ON PULPIT ELOQUENCE—BOSSUET, HIS LIFE AND WORKS — BOURDALOUE — MASSILLON — FLECHIER — SAURIN — FORENSIC ORATORS.

LOUIS XIV. afforded to religious eloquence the most efficacious of all kinds of encouragement—that of personal attendance. The court-preachers had no more attentive auditor than their royal master, who was singularly gifted with that tenderness of conscience which leads a man to condemn himself for his sins, yet indulge in their commission; to feel a certain pleasure in self-accusation, and to enjoy that reaction of mind which consists in occasionally holding his passions in abeyance, and yielding to the better feelings which ought to have per-

manently controlled them. He suffered the greatest evangelical liberty to those who thus ministered to him: they were free to inculcate the highest style of morality, and even to portray and denounce the very vices in which the king most freely indulged. They were not, indeed, permitted to make the personal application; but he made no scruple of showing that he made it himself, and felt for the time the severity of the admonitions that were conveyed. This kind of attention on the part of a great monarch; the liberty of saying everything, tempered with the obligation to speak respectfully and to the purpose; the refined taste of an audience who could on the same day attend a sermon of Bourdaloue and a tragedy of Racine; all these circumstances tended to lead pulpit eloquence to the highest degree of perfection, and accordingly we find the function of court-preacher exercised successively by Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon, the greatest names that the Roman Catholic Church has boasted in any age or country; and in every page of whose sermons we recognise sources from which our own divines have drawn most abundantly. No marvel that attendance on sermons in those days was not merely a religious duty, but one of the highest intellectual gratifications.

Briefly to characterize the respective merits of these preachers, we should say that Bossuet addressed the conscience through the imagination, Bourdaloue through the judgment, and Massillon through the feelings: the first was the graphic painter; the second the convincing reasoner; and the third, the moving pleader. Fléchier, another court-preacher, renowned chiefly in funeral oration, was a rhetorician more showy than solid, and by no means free from the affectation of the *Précieuses*. The monarch himself said: "Father Massillon, I have heard several great orators in my chapel, and I have been very much pleased with them; but whenever I have heard you, I have been very much displeased with my-

self." Such testimony might decide the palm, were it not for the consideration, that ere Massillon ascended the pulpit, Louis XIV. had seen somewhat of the vanity of human greatness, the failure of human calculations, and the limits which there are to the power of gratification, even in passions laid under no restraint. His own experience had gone far to prove that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; and he was thus better prepared than in earlier years to listen to the dictates of evangelical truth. Bossuet is generally allowed to stand at the head of the list of French preachers. He was, besides, perhaps of all men of his day, the one who received most deeply the impress of the great monarch, and was the most distinguished type of the age of Louis XIV., in all save its vices. It is for these reasons that we introduce him first to the reader.

BOSSUET, afterwards bishop of Méaux, was born at Dijon in 1627, of a family of some repute in the legal profession, and educated at a school of the Jesuits, where he early gave indications of that serious and studious disposition which characterized his maturer years.\* He was but a child, when there fell into his hands a Latin Bible, the reading of which made an impression that remained with him through life. He always adverted to it with the liveliest interest. When removed for higher improvement to the College of Navarre, he studied Greek with enthusiasm, and made himself acquainted with the master-pieces of antiquity; but the Holy Scriptures formed his principal reading. The philosophy of Descartes was beginning to attract attention; but Bossuet had no knowledge either of the exact or natural sciences, and drank deeply into nothing that was not immediately connected with religion. After his first public essay, when he was sixteen years of age, he was declared a prodigy; whereupon he was invited to the

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\* He was so distinguished for his assiduity at school, that his associates, punning upon his name, used to say that he was a "*Bos suetus aratro.*"

Hôtel de Rambouillet, and was requested to give an impromptu sermon, as a test of that fertility of thought and facility of expression with which he was so highly gifted. After a few moments' thought, the young orator delivered a discourse which excited general admiration, and completely established his character as a preacher. On another occasion—that of his admission into the corporation of the college—his theme was a comparison of the glory of the present world with that of the just in the life to come. It was immediately after the peace of Westphalia, when the country rang with the heroic deeds of the Prince of Condé. In the midst of the discourse, the warrior himself entered the assembly, surrounded by an escort of his companions in arms. On the instant, Bossuet, without hesitation or appearance of interruption, addressed the young conqueror, and offered him, in the name of France, the just tribute of a nation's gratitude and admiration; but, as with a prophet's authority, told him how vain and perishable were the laurel-wreaths on his brow; how little to compare with the "crown of glory that fadeth not away." The prince was deeply affected, and contracted a lasting friendship for the preacher, who, forty years afterwards, repeated the same truths over his tomb.

The reputation of Bossuet grew and spread, but he seemed never to perceive his own success; the Bible and the Christian Fathers were his constant companions; and he declined promotion to the grand-mastership of Navarre, choosing rather to devote himself wholly to clerical duties. At the solicitation of the bishop of Metz, he entered into the controversy against the Protestants, and inspired even his opponents with respect for his talents, while he succeeded in making several distinguished converts to the old religion. At this time he was obliged frequently to visit Paris, where he preached before the royal family, and gained a high reputation as a pulpit orator; but he uniformly declined a permanent cure in the



capital, preferring the retirement of Metz. His religious influence became so great, that when the recluses of Port Royal refused to subscribe the required formulary with respect to the Jansenist doctrine, Bossuet was the man employed to bring them to reason. In the prosecution of this task, he treated them with great gentleness and forbearance; invited them to submit to the church; and set before them the blessedness of believing without examining, the privilege of not having to pilot themselves through the difficulties connected with religious truth, but possessing an infallible guide in the authority of the church. The Port Royalists courted criticism and controversy at his hands, though remaining persuaded of the soundness of their own views.

In 1669, Bossuet was elevated to the episcopate, after which he gave place to Bourdaloue as a preacher, but still delivered funeral orations on great occasions. These are considered the choicest specimens of his eloquence. In 1670, he was appointed preceptor to the dauphin, now nine years of age; and it was for his instruction that he wrote the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, by which he is chiefly known to us; and *La Politique de l'Ecriture Sainte*. The latter is a series of Scripture quotations, connected by appropriate reflections, which serve for connexion and transition. It treats not of government or political constitutions, or the balance of power; but it shows how sovereigns should be pious and just; and how their subjects should be obedient and faithful; and what divine chastisements are reserved for a tyrannical monarch on the one hand, and for a corrupt and rebellious nation on the other. Here is no disquisition on the best mode of government, or the wisest code of laws; all this Bossuet was content to leave to Divine Providence to establish in the course of events, while he taught sovereigns to administer, and subjects to obey, the laws and government as they found them. A letter which he addressed to Innocent XI., rendering, according to the pontiff's

desire, an account of his mode of education, possesses considerable interest, especially as showing the difference between his views and those of Fénelon on the same subject. In Bossuet, there appears an upright and elevated mind, a correct idea of the end to be obtained, but an inflexibility which could never accommodate itself to the temper of his pupil, or adapt his language and manners to suit his age, or clothe his didactics in an attractive form. "He knew man, but not men," says one; he possessed a simple power of persuasion, and an almost prophetic authority, which served him well in the pulpit to point out the path of duty, and insist on its being fulfilled; but he had no power of individual adaptation, and therefore failed as a tutor, notwithstanding his success as a preacher.

The Protestant controversy occupied Bossuet still more fully after the completion of the prince's education, and his own elevation to the bishopric of Meaux. It was this that elicited his famous *Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique*, in which the Protestants aver that he has not set forth the true dogmas of his church, but has modified them in such wise as to render them reasonable and attractive. A still more celebrated work is the *Histoire des Variations*, of which the leading principle is, that to forsake the authority of the church, leads one knows not whither; that there can be no new religious views except false ones; and that there is no escape from that faith which has been transmitted from age to age, except into the wide wastes of scepticism. "La véritable simplicité de la doctrine chrétienne consiste essentiellement à toujours se déterminer en ce qui regarde la foi, par ce fait certain : hier on croyait ainsi, donc aujourd'hui il faut croire encore de même." The famous historian Gibbon is said to have been converted by this book. Bossuet's calm, self-possessed, and courteous manner, gave him a great advantage in controversy; his tone was that of full persuasion in his own mind, with somewhat that conveyed the

impression that the opponents of the apostolic church were giddy, fickle, and rebellious spirits, wandering hither and thither, seeking but never finding any firm footing. Yet there was no bitterness or haughtiness in the manner of announcing this. Bossuet thus became the great champion of the Romish faith in France; and when some hope was entertained of reuniting the Lutherans to the church, he was appointed to negotiate with Leibnitz, whom the court of Brunswick had named on the part of the Lutherans. The correspondence between these two great men is still extant, and possesses considerable interest.

Another controversy occupied the old age of Bossuet, and showed him to much less advantage. The mysticism of Madame Guyon's\* piety had proved very infectious among the higher circles, and the contagion had reached the court. Madame de Maintenon had introduced it at St. Cyr; and every day added to the number of Madame Guyon's disciples. Her works were referred to Bossuet for examination; and Fénelon, who had himself embraced her views, attended, not indeed as their defender, but as the modest interpreter of the lady's somewhat grotesque and incoherent language, which might have been taken for that of a maniac. He endeavored to show that she entertained no doctrine but that which had been held by St. Francis de Sales, St. Theresa, and other Mystics approved by the church. But Bossuet regarded as highly dangerous this depreciation of good works and outward forms, and this search for undefinable frames and feelings. Guyon and Fénelon, indeed, maintained that a holy practice would be the inevitable consequence of their beatific contemplations and holy raptures; but Bossuet could not believe that one should profess to himself as an end a thing so intangible as a frame of mind into which one might get in and out without exactly

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\* See Upham's *Life of Madame Guyon*, 2 vols., New York, 1847.

knowing how. Not that he denied the reality and blessedness of a high degree of religious feeling. He had himself said : “ Là s’entendrait la dernière consolation de l’amour divin, dans un endroit de l’âme si profond et si retiré, que les sens n’en soupçonnent rien, tant il est éloigné de leur région ; mais, pour s’expliquer sur cette matière, il faudrait un langage que le monde n’entendrait pas.”

Some new extravagances of the Mystics determined Bossuet to proceed to extremities against this system : Madame Guyon was arrested ; the bishops were directed to prohibit the circulation of her works in their respective dioceses ; and Bossuet wrote a refutation of her doctrines. Fénelon would not lend himself to the persecution of a lady whom he greatly admired, and whom he believed to be as blameless in life as she was religious in heart. He thought they had taken occasion from her mode of expressing herself, and that her words rather than her sentiments were objectionable. Bossuet was angry at this modifying, manœuvring, and refining ; this insinuation, that only certain minds were capable of comprehending Madame Guyon ; in short, this attempt to clear mysticism of all that could be deemed reprehensible. While he was composing his book against the Mystics, Fénelon wrote his *Maximes des Saintes*, in which he endeavored to show, that the views of the Quietists were those of others whom the church had even canonized and honored with public worship. Louis XIV., through Bossuet’s influence, banished Fénelon from the court, disgraced his friends, and sent the *Maximes* to Rome for condemnation. The quarrel became warmer every day. Bossuet, irritated at the moderate and submissive tone of his opponent, forgot his former character, and became perfectly furious. Perhaps there has never been a religious controversy more warm and more sincere ; in which there was less appearance of selfish rivalry, or more pure zeal for what each believed to be the truth. It was for the same creed, and within the same church ;



the combatants differing only as to the most acceptable mode of loving and serving the Supreme Being. The pope was induced to pass a censure on the *Maximes*, but one which his holiness deemed hardly necessary; and Bossuet was dissatisfied that he had not gone deeper into the matter of the controversy. Meanwhile, the gentleness of Fénelon gained over many who had not subtilty enough to enter into the merits of his opinions; and if Bossuet had been capable of attaching any importance to the popular voice, he must have been grieved at the universal veneration with which Fénelon was regarded.

The last labors of Bossuet were devoted to the discipline of the clergy, whom he wished to restore to a scrupulous observance of their duties and fulfilment of their vows. He had nearly attained his seventy-sixth year, his mind preserving its wonted vigor, when he was attacked by a painful disease, and fever supervened. He died at Paris, April 12, 1704, and was buried in the cathedral at Méaux.

It has been said, that French eloquence never appeared with so little art, so little study of effect, as in Bossuet. It was a great mind discovering itself without a veil, and carrying all along with it. The choice of words, the art of arrangement, the harmony of sounds, the elevated or the familiar—all were nothing to him; everything was good that served to express his thoughts. There is even a rudeness in his simplicity, which seems to disdain every attempt to gratify or seduce the reader. His familiarity with the language of inspiration imparted to his prelections a tone of almost prophetic authority. His eloquence appeared as a native instinct—a gift direct from Heaven, neither marred nor improved by the study of human rules. His works—controversial, historical, devotional—have passed through numerous editions, and the most celebrated of them have been translated into our own language.

His sermons were paternal and familiar exhortations: he seldom prepared them, but, abandoning himself to the inspira-

tion of the moment, was now simple and touching, now energetic and sublime. An admiring recollection of them has been handed down from generation to generation among the people of his charge at Meaux.

The following is the concluding passage of his funeral oration over the Prince of Condé, already alluded to; and the more interesting, as with this discourse Bossuet terminated his career as an orator. Having briefly alluded to the splendid deeds of the hero, and then to the qualities of his mind and heart, he proceeded to consider him as a Christian, traced the progress of truth in his soul, and leading the hearers to the death-bed scene, described the last victory of the prince, that of faith over unbelief, and exclaimed :—

Que se faisait-il dans cette âme ? quelle nouvelle lumière lui apparaissait ? quel soudain rayon perçait la nue, et faisait comme évanouir en ce moment avec toutes les ignorances des sens les ténèbres mêmes, si je l'ose dire, et les saintes obscurités de la foi ? Que devinrent alors ces beaux titres dont notre orgueil est flatté ? Dans l'approche d'un si beau jour, et dès la première atteinte d'une si vive lumière, combien promptement disparaissent tous les fantômes du monde ! que l'éclat de la plus belle victoire paraît sombre ! qu'on en méprise la gloire, et qu'on veut de mal à ces faibles yeux qui s'y sont laissé éblouir ! Venez, peuples, venez maintenant ; mais venez plutôt, princes et seigneurs, et vous qui jugez la terre, et vous qui ouvrez aux hommes les portes du ciel, et vous plus que tous les autres, princes et princesses, nobles rejetons de tant de rois, lumières de la France, mais aujourd'hui obscurcies et couvertes de votre douleur comme d'un nuage ; venez voir le peu qui nous reste d'une si auguste naissance, de tant de grandeur, de tant de gloire. Jetez les yeux de toutes parts : voilà tout ce qu'a pu faire la magnificence et la piété pour honorer un héros ; des titres, des inscriptions, vaines marques de ce qui n'est plus ; des figures qui semblent pleurer autour d'un tombeau et des fragiles images d'une douleur que le temps emporte avec tout le reste ; des colonnes qui semblent vouloir porter jusqu'au ciel le magnifique témoignage de notre néant ; et rien enfin ne manque dans tous ces honneurs que celui à qui on les rend. Pleurez donc sur ces faibles restes de la vie humaine, pleurez sur cette triste immortalité que nous

donnons aux héros ; mais approchez en particulier, ô vous qui courez avec tant d'ardeur dans la carrière de la gloire, âmes guerrières et intrépides ; quel autre fut plus digne de vous commander ? mais dans quel autre avez-vous trouvé le commandement plus honnête ? pleurez donc ce grand capitaine, et dites en gémissant : Voilà celui qui nous menait dans les hasards ; sous lui se sont formés tant de renommés capitaines que ses exemples ont élevés aux premiers honneurs de la guerre : son ombre eût pu encore gagner des batailles, et voilà que dans son silence son nom même nous anime, et ensemble il nous avertit que pour trouver à la mort quelque reste de nos travaux, et n'arriver pas sans ressource à notre éternelle demeure, avec le roi de la terre il faut encore servir le roi du ciel. Servez donc ce roi immortel et si plein de miséricorde, qui vous comptera un soupir et un verre d'eau donné en son nom plus que tous les autres ne feront jamais tout votre sang répandu ; et commencez à compter le temps de vos utiles services du jour que vous vous serez donnés à un maître si bienfaisant. Et vous, ne viendrez-vous pas à ce triste monument, vous, dis-je, qu'il a bien voulu mettre au rang de ses amis ? tous ensemble, en quelque degré de sa confiance qu'il vous ait reçus, environnez ce tombeau, versez des larmes avec des prières, et, admirant dans un si grand prince une amitié si commode et un commerce si doux, conservez le souvenir d'un héros dont la bonté avait égalé le courage. Ainsi puisse-t-il toujours vous être un cher entretien ! ainsi puissiez-vous profiter de ses vertus ! et que sa mort, que vous déplorez, vous serve à la fois de consolation et d'exemple ! Pour moi, s'il m'est permis, après tous les autres, de venir rendre les derniers devoirs à ce tombeau, ô prince, le digne sujet de nos louanges et de nos regrets, vous vivrez éternellement dans ma mémoire ; votre image y sera tracée, non point avec cette audace qui promettait la victoire, non, je ne veux rien voir en vous de ce que la mort y efface ; vous aurez dans cette image des traits immortels ; je vous y verrai tel que vous étiez à ce dernier jour sous la main de Dieu, lorsque sa gloire sembla commencer à vous apparaître. C'est là que je vous verrai plus triomphant qu'à Fribourg et à Rocroi ; et, ravi d'un si beau triomphe, je dirai en action de grâces ces belles paroles du bien-aimé disciple : *Et hæc est victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra* : “ La véritable victoire, celle qui met sous nos pieds le monde entier, c'est notre foi.” Jouissez, prince, de cette victoire, jouissez-en éternellement par l'immortelle vertu de ce sacrifice ; agréez ces derniers efforts d'une voix qui vous fut connue : vous

mettrez fin à tous ces discours. Au lieu de déplorer la mort des autres, grand prince, dorénavant je veux apprendre de vous à rendre la mienne sainte : heureux si, averti par ces cheveux blancs du compte que je dois rendre de mon administration, je réserve au troupeau que je dois nourrir de la parole de vie les restes d'une voix qui tombe et d'une ardeur qui s'éteint !

BOURDALOUE was born at Bourges, August 20, 1632. At the age of sixteen he joined the society of Jesuits. He began to preach when he was twenty-four years old. In 1670 he appeared at court. The king was so pleased with his eloquence that he required him to preach ten series of sermons in the royal chapel. He used to say that he had rather hear Bourdaloue's old sermons than the new ones of any one else. Bourdaloue had little of the fervor and grandeur of Bossuet. He was logical and accurate. He reached the heart through the reason, rather than through the emotions. He committed his sermons to memory, and recited them. When asked which of them he liked best, he answered, "the one that I know best." He has been styled "*le prédicateur des rois, et le roi des prédicateurs.*" He died about a month after Bossuet, May 13, 1704.\*

In the following passage from his sermon on The Last Judgment, we have a fair specimen of the court style of preaching we have referred to as combining the high tone of evangelical faithfulness with a due admixture of respect, and even, as it seems to us, of flattery towards the royal auditor :—

Aussi est-ce proprement aux Monarques et aux Souverains, qu'il appartient de juger ; et jamais la majesté d'un Roi n'est plus auguste, que quand il tient son lit de justice, et qu'il paroît sur le tribunal. Encore plus vénérable, quand c'est un Roi qui ajoute à l'éclat de la couronne les lumières d'une sagesse toute royale : un Roi qui sait faire le discernement de ses sujets, et peser le mérite dans une juste

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\* See Bungener's Preacher and the King, or Bourdaloue in the Court of Louis XIV.



balance ; qui n'a pour le crime que des châtimens, tandis que toutes ses récompenses sont pour la vertu ; qui non seulement fait état de venger les injustices et les violences, mais qui s'applique à réformer la justice même ; qui en corrige les abus, qui en rétablit le bon ordre ; qui, sans éloigner personne de son trône, prête l'oreille aux humbles supplications des petits, écoute les plaintes des particuliers, et par-là tient les juges et les magistrats dans le devoir : enfin qui se voyant au dessus de tous, n'a rien plus à cœur que d'être équitable envers tous. Car qu'y a-t-il qui nous représente mieux sur la terre le jugement de Dieu, et qui en soit une image plus sensible et une preuve plus authentique ?

Mais, sire, si c'est le propre des Rois de juger les peuples, il n'est pas moins vrai que c'est le propre de Dieu de juger les Rois ; et comme le grand privilège de la souveraineté est de ne pouvoir être jugé que de Dieu seul, on peut dire que la grande marque de l'autorité suprême de Dieu est d'être lui seul le Juge de tous les souverains. Il nous l'a lui-même marqué en cent endroits de l'Ecriture ; et si son jugement doit être terrible pour toutes les conditions des hommes, il semble néanmoins qu'il affecte de la faire paroître plus redoutable pour les Grands et pour les Rois de la terre : *Terribili apud Reges terræ.*

C'est de ce jugement, Sire, où les Rois seront appelés, aussi bien que les peuples, que j'ai à parler aujourd'hui. Autrefois saint Paul prêchant cette matière en présence même des infidèles et des païens, la traitoit avec tant de force et tant d'énergie, qu'ils en étoient émus, saisis, effrayés : *Disputante autem illo de justitia et castitate, et de judicio futuro, tremefactus Felix.* Je n'ai ni le zèle, ni l'éloquence de saint Paul : mais aussi j'ai l'avantage de parler devant un Roi Chrétien et très-Chrétien ; devant un Roi docile aux vérités de la religion, et disposé non seulement à les écouter, mais à en profiter. Ainsi j'ai droit d'espérer de mon ministère, tout indigne que j'en suis, un succès beaucoup plus heureux. J'ai besoin pour cela des lumières du Saint-Esprit.

MASSILLON was born in 1663, June 24th, at Hières, in Provence. At an early age he gave promise of future eminence. But, finding his ambition too strong, he retired to an obscure monastery, and devoted himself to penitence and study.

He was, however, soon summoned to Paris to take charge of a seminary. He there had an opportunity to hear the celebrated pulpit orators of the capital. He said that he should not imitate them, if he preached. He resolved that he would persuade and win by the appeals of love, rather than conquer by argumentation, and by presenting merely the terrors of the law. His superiors in the order of the Oratory, to which he belonged, required him to preach, and in 1699 he gave the course of sermons for Lent at Paris. Everybody was fascinated by his style. The streets which led to his church were crowded with carriages. The great cathedral of Notre Dame was filled to overflowing, whenever he preached there. The enthusiasm of the king and the court was equally great, when he appeared in the royal chapel at Versailles.

It was his fortune to deliver the funeral oration of the Prince of Conti in 1709, of the Dauphin in 1710, and finally of the King in 1715. Few scenes could be more impressive than that, which was witnessed in the royal chapel at Versailles, when the last rites were paid to the *Grand Monarque*. Massillon took for his text the words of Solomon, "*Voici que je suis devenu grand.*" He solemnly pronounced the words, paused, looked fixedly upon the assembly, turned slowly towards the symbols of mourning with which the chapel was hung, then towards the dark mausoleum in the centre of the chapel, and exclaimed, "*Dieu seul est grand, mes frères.*"

The regent called him to preach a *Carême* before the young king. He composed the ten sermons, which are known by the name of the *Petit Carême*, in six weeks. He was afterwards made bishop of Clermont. In 1719 he was received by the Academy. He spent the closing years of his life in deeds of charity and devotion to the labors of his diocese. As he passed along the streets of the town in which he lived, it is said that

the grateful people used to kneel down, crying "*Vive notre Père.*" He died of apoplexy, September 28, 1742.

His style is rich, almost to verbosity. It is exceedingly flowing and easy, tender and earnest. Voltaire was accustomed to have the *Petit Carême* lying on his table, as one of the best models of eloquence. It won for its author the title of the Racine of the pulpit.

We give an extract from his sermon on "*The Small Number of the Elect.*" It is said that when this passage was delivered, the vast audience arose from their seats, thrilled with admiration, or stricken with terror.

Il n'est peut-être personne ici, qui ne puisse dire de soi : "*Je vis comme le grand nombre, comme ceux de mon rang, de mon âge, de mon état ; je suis perdu, si je meurs dans cette voie.*" Or, quoi de plus propre à effrayer une âme à qui il reste encore quelque soin de son salut ? Cependant c'est la multitude, qui ne tremble point ; il n'est qu'un petit nombre de justes, qui opèrent à l'écart leur salut avec crainte ; tout le reste est calme : on sait en général que le grande nombre se damne ; mais on se flatte qu'après avoir vécu avec la multitude, ou sera discerné à la mort ; chacun se met dans le cas d'une exception chimérique ; chacun augure favorablement pour soi.

Et c'est pour cela que je m'arrête à vous, mes frères, qui êtes ici assemblés : je ne parle plus du reste des hommes ; je vous regarde comme si vous étiez seuls sur la terre : et voici la pensée qui m'occupe et qui m'épouvante. Je suppose que c'est ici votre dernière heure et la fin de l'univers ; que les cieux vont s'ouvrir sur vos têtes ; Jésus-Christ paraître dans sa gloire au milieu de ce temple, et que vous n'y êtes assemblés que pour l'attendre, et comme des criminels tremblants, à qui l'on va prononcer, ou une sentence de grâce, ou un arrêt de mort éternelle : car vous avez beau vous flatter, vous mourrez tels que vous êtes aujourd'hui ; tous ces désirs de changements, qui vous amusent, vous amuseront jusqu'au lit de la mort ; c'est l'expérience de tous les siècles : tout ce que vous trouverez alors en vous de nouveau sera peut-être un compte un peu plus grand que ce que vous auriez aujourd'hui à rendre ; et sur ce que vous seriez, si l'on venait vous juger dans le moment, vous pouvez presque décider de ce qui vous arrivera au sortir de la vie.

Or, je vous demande, et je vous le demande frappé de terreur, ne séparant pas en ce point mon sort du vôtre, et me mettant dans la même disposition où je souhaite que vous entriez; je vous demande donc: si Jésus-Christ paraissait dans ce temple, au milieu de cette assemblée, la plus auguste de l'univers, pour nous juger, pour faire le terrible discernement des boucs et des brebis, croyez-vous que le plus grand nombre de tout ce que nous sommes ici fût placé à la droite? Croyez-vous que les choses du moins fussent égales? Croyez-vous qu'il s'y trouvât seulement dix justes, que le Seigneur ne put trouver autrefois en cinq villes tout entières? Je vous le demande; vous l'ignorez, et je l'ignore moi-même; vous seul, ô mon Dieu! connaissez ceux, qui vous appartiennent; mais si nous ne connaissons pas ceux qui lui appartiennent, nous savons du moins que les pécheurs ne lui appartiennent pas. Or, qui sont les fidèles ici assemblés? Les titres et les dignités ne doivent être comptés pour rien; vous en serez dépouillés devant Jésus-Christ: qui sont-ils? beaucoup de pécheurs qui ne veulent pas se convertir; encore plus qui le voudraient, mais qui diffèrent leur conversion; plusieurs autres qui ne se convertissent jamais que pour retomber; enfin un grand nombre qui croient n'avoir pas besoin de conversion: voilà le parti des réprouvés. Retranchez ces quatre sortes de pécheurs de cette assemblée sainte; car ils en seront retranchés au grand jour; paraissez maintenant, justes; où êtes-vous? Restes d'Israël, passez à la droite: froment de Jésus-Christ, démêlez-vous de cette paille destinée au feu: ô Dieu! où sont vos élus? et que reste-t-il pour votre partage?

France does not acknowledge the Protestant SAURIN (1677-1730), as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes expatriated him in childhood; but his sermons, characterized by powerful, manly, vehement, and often touching eloquence, original conception, and forcible argument, occupy a distinguished place in the theological literature of the French language.

Sacred eloquence was not the only kind exercised in France at this time. It is true that political or parliamentary oratory was as yet unknown; for the parliaments, which were mere corporate judicatures, no sooner touched on matters of state and government, than Louis XIV. entered, booted and spurred, with whip in hand, and not figuratively but literally lashed the



refractory deliberation into silence and obedience. There was another species, however, though of less celebrity and later growth than that of the pulpit—the judiciary, or eloquence of the bar—which enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom. The advocates even then claimed a sort of immunity from the curious eye of the Jesuits and of the police, both as regarded their opinions and their libraries; and the bar long cherished and vindicated whatever of constitutional and legal right existed in France.

Forensic eloquence, however, had not wholly escaped the affected jargon of euphuism. Law and reason were too often overlaid by a fantastic abuse of classic and Scripture citations, worthless conceits, and impertinent erudition; and LEMAITRE, the earliest orator of this period that demands our attention, was by no means free from these vices; yet he had fire and feeling, and was more imaginative, ardent, and brilliant than those of his followers, who are considered the reformers of French eloquence in this respect.

Patru, Pellisson, Terrasson, Cochin, D'Aguesseau, were the men who successfully purified and elevated the language of the tribunals. PATRU cultivated ancient literature, and was the first, says Voltaire, who introduced a pure style at the bar. "His pleadings," says Hume, "are very elegant, and give us room to imagine what so fine a genius could have performed in questions concerning public liberty or slavery, peace or war, who exerts himself with such success in debates concerning the price of an old horse, or the gossiping story of a quarrel betwixt an abbess and her nuns."

Patru was followed and greatly surpassed by PELLISSON, the confidential secretary of Fouquet. His pleadings, which Voltaire has pronounced equal to Cicero's Oration for Ligarius, were composed during the time that he was incarcerated in

the Bastille as the accomplice of his fallen patron. They were not intended for personal delivery, but they possess an interest of their own, as the offspring of a disinterested and fearless friendship supplicating for mercy without abandoning the high ground of innocence and justice; stating hardships without seeming to complain; working upon the feelings and ministering to the vanity of the judge, without exciting in the bosom of the jealous tyrant the apprehension that his weakness was played upon, or his understanding slighted. We give in his own language a few sentences from his first pleading, addressed directly to Louis XIV. He is deprecating the mode of trial by special commissioners, instead of before the ordinary tribunals.

S'il faut enfin entendre la voix du peuple, cette voix, sire, qui est si souvent celle de Dieu, cette voix qui fait, à vrai dire, la gloire des rois, qui parle si magnifiquement aujourd'hui, par toute la terre, des vertus de V. M.,\* elle dira à V. M. que tout ce qui n'est point naturel et ordinaire, lui est suspect—qu'un innocent même, condamné par notre parlement, passe toujours pour coupable—qu'un coupable même condamné par des commissaires, laisse toujours au public et à la postérité quelque soupçon d'innocence—qu'enfin le général du monde regarde ces deux sortes de juges comme deux choses tout à fait différentes—témoin la réponse de ce bon religieux, que l'histoire n'a pas trouvée indigne d'être rapportée, quand le roi François I. regardant à Marcoussy le tombeau d'un surintendant immolé, sous un des rois précédens, aux jalousies de la cour, et à la passion d'un duc de Bourgogne, et ce grand prince disant que c'était dommage qu'on eût fait mourir un tel homme par justice—"ce n'est pas par justice, sire," répondit ingénument le religieux, "c'est par commissaires."

Towards the close, he affects a sudden transition from the justice of the king to his mercy—affects, we say, because he had been covertly appealing to it before.

Jusqu'ici, sire, je n'ai parlé qu'à la justice de V. M.—Que cette justice même me permette maintenant de m'adresser à ses autres vertus, à sa bonté, à sa clémence, à sa sagesse; si j'ai défendu M.

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\* Votre Majesté.

Fouquet comme innocent, que je parle encore pour lui comme coupable, en faisant faire à V. M. certaines réflexions générales, mais importantes, qui le supposant même coupable, demandent son salut et sa grace à un prince tel que V. M. Que V. M. me pardonne, s'il lui plaît, cette longueur en un sujet important; je vais finir, je ne lui dirai rien de commun, rien que de grand, rien que d'illustre, rien que de digne d'un roi.

In his concluding peroration, he anticipates the judgment of posterity upon Louis XIV.; but this passage, though highly extolled by French critics, is too exaggerated for modern and British taste. The subsequent career of Pellisson did not realize the expectation that might have been formed either of his superior talents or disinterested character. Being released from the Bastille, after a captivity of nearly five years, he employed his talents in composing panegyrics upon the king from whom he had suffered such treatment. Moreover, he abandoned the religion of a Huguenot, and embraced the Romish faith; became an abbé and a courtier; made his fortune; and composed *Prayers during Mass*, *Pieces of Gallantry*, *A Treatise on the Eucharist*, and *Amatory Verses to Olympia*. It is agreed, however, that he died unsacramented, and, as some say, sceptical and indifferent on the subject of religion.

The most accomplished judicial orator, however, of this age, if he does not more properly belong to the eighteenth century, was D'AGUESSEAU, afterwards chancellor of France. He never practised as a mere advocate, having commenced his career at an early age with a function in the magistracy, which, unlike that of England, afforded frequent and favorable occasions for eloquence in the distribution of justice.

## XVI.—THE MORALISTS.

ROCHEFOUCAULD—LA BRUYERE—NICOLE.

FRANCIS, DUKE OF ROCHEFOUCAULD,\* was the representative of one of those noble families whose power had often measured itself with that of the sovereign, but had for some time been forced, by the vigorous policy of Richelieu, to restrain itself within its own feudal domains. He was born at the paternal castle of Rochefoucauld, in Angoumois, in 1613, two years after the assassination of Henry IV.; and first came to court during the height of the cardinal's power, "a young man of prepossessing appearance and dignified carriage," as Madame Maintenon describes him; "of considerable talent, too, but little knowledge, his education having been neglected."

When, on the death of Cardinal Richelieu, the nobles deemed it their turn to lift their heads again, Rochefoucauld, in common with other nobles, was drawn into those conflicts known as the Wars of the Fronde, as the party was called that opposed the queen-regent and her minister, Cardinal Mazarin. Yet it would seem that he scarcely knew what he desired, and had no motive for either fighting or intriguing except the mere restlessness of his spirit, and his attachment to the Duchess of Longueville; according to the well-known couplet which he wrote at the bottom of her portrait:—

Pour meriter son cœur, pour plaire à ses beaux yeux,  
J'ai fait la guerre aux rois: je l'aurois faite aux dieux.

Truth is, he was hurried into a course of action by passions stronger than his reason, and events yet stronger than his passions. A serious wound, however, which he received in the battle of the Faubourg of St. Antoine, disabled him from con-

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\* A translation of his *Maxims* was published at New York in 1851. For a sketch of his life see Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*.



tinuing in the struggle. He wisely, therefore, resolved to extricate himself from the web in which he was entangled: quarrelled with the duchess; received permission from the Prince of Condé to dissolve his alliance with him; committed his estate to his steward, to endeavor to retrieve it from the utter ruin which the war had nearly involved; restricted himself to a small yearly sum to live upon; and being afterwards included in the amnesty, took up his residence at Paris, and turned moralist. He was one of the brightest ornaments of the court circle of Louis XIV., whose confidence, however, he never entirely regained. His chosen friends in his declining years were Madame de Sévigné, one of the most accomplished women of the age, and Madame de Lafayette, who says of him: "He gave me intellect, and I reformed his heart." It would seem that it had much need of reformation, after the life he had spent among the fools, knaves, and demoralized women of the Fronde; and, moreover, that if the lady succeeded in removing the taint from his heart, it continued to stain his understanding. It was at this time that he composed his famous *Reflexions et Sentences, ou Maximes Morales*, which being published in 1665, gained for the author a lasting reputation, no less from the perfection of his style than the boldness of his paradoxes. The leading peculiarity of this work is the principle, that self-interest is the ruling motive in corrupt human nature, placing every virtue as well as vice under contribution to itself. Some of the maxims are obvious enough truths, as the following:—

There is in the human heart a perpetual generation of passions; so that the destruction of one is almost always the birth of another.

We promise according to our hopes; we perform according to our fears.

No one is either so happy or so unhappy as he imagines.

Fortune turns everything to the advantage of those whom she favors.

There is but one true love, but there are a thousand copies.

It is more shameful to distrust our friends than to be deceived by them.

A fool has not stuff enough in him to be virtuous.

Our minds are more indolent than our bodies.

Jealousy is always born with love, but does not always die with it.

It would seem that nature has concealed talents and capacities in the depths of our minds of which we have no knowledge: that passion alone can bring these into day, and give us more certain and perfect views than art can afford.

We arrive quite new at the different ages of life, and often want experience in spite of the number of years we have lived.

It is being truly virtuous to be willing to be always exposed to the view of the virtuous.

Others are somewhat subtle, as the celebrated one, "that we often find something in the misfortunes of our best friends that is not displeasing to us."

It is generally agreed that Rochefoucauld's views of human nature were perverted by the specimens of it which he had first and most intimately known. The Fronde was the soil in which his *Maximes* had root, though better times softened their harshness, and inspired better and higher thoughts. It usually happens that public convulsions give birth to heroism as well as crime, and that the cruelties of war and massacre are partly redeemed by courage and self-sacrifice; but, in the wars of the Fronde, there were neither any splendid actions nor any signal crimes. Vice and folly, a restless desire of power and an eager yet aimless party-spirit, animated the Frondeurs; their war was a contest of knaves, each fighting for his own private ends, under color of patriotism, and receiving defeat as his well-merited punishment. Hence the low opinion which Rochefoucauld formed of human nature. His *Memoires sur le Règne d'Anne d'Autriche*, embody the story of the Fronde; and his *Maximes*, the moral philosophy he

deduced from it. He died in 1680, in the arms of Bossuet, leaving poor Madame de Lafayette lonely and inconsolable.

While Rochefoucauld was taking so deep and so melancholy a view of human nature, through the medium of an age which had forced every character into unnatural extremes, the young BRUYERE was serving his apprenticeship as an observer, in a comparatively disciplined society, and at a time when both virtues and vices had regained their natural proportions.

The fame of his writings contrasts singularly with the obscurity of his life. He was exercising a kind of clerkship in a provincial town, when Bossuet brought him to Paris, it is not known on what recommendation, to teach history to the young prince, Louis de Bourbon. After the education of the prince was completed, La Bruyère continued a member of the household. Being naturally an observer and a moralist, he published a translation of the *Characters* of Theophrastus; and afterwards, in 1687, appended to it a similar work of his own, *Les Caractères de Notre Siècle*, in which he excelled his model in the exactness and variety of the portraits, as well as in the excellence of the style. It was read with avidity, not only on account of its intrinsic merit, but because it was believed that a living name might be written under every one of the portraits, though they were professedly delineations, not of individuals, but of characters.

As the *Pensées* of Pascal and the *Maximes* of Rochefoucauld were then in every one's hands, La Bruyère deemed it necessary to anticipate the charge of imitation; and to this we owe the following characteristic remarks on his predecessors:—

L'un [the *Thoughts*], par l'engagement de son auteur, fait servir la métaphysique à la religion, fait connaître l'âme, ses passions, ses vices, traite les grands et les sérieux motifs pour conduire à la vertu, et veut rendre l'homme chrétien.

L'autre [the *Maxims*], qui est la production d'un esprit instruit

par le commerce du monde, et dont la délicatesse était égale à la pénétration, observant que l'amour-propre est dans l'homme la cause de tous ses faibles, l'attaque sans relâche, quelque part où il le trouve; et cette unique pensée, comme multipliée en mille autres, a toujours, par le choix des mots et la variété de l'expression, la grâce de la nouveauté.

After which La Bruyère thus characterizes himself:—

L'on ne suit aucune de ces routes dans l'ouvrage qui est joint à la traduction des *Caractères* [of Theophrastus]; il est tout différent des deux autres que je viens de toucher: moins sublime que le premier et moins délicat que le second, il ne tend qu'à rendre l'homme raisonnable, mais par des voies simples et communes.

Pascal had pronounced upon the imperfection of human nature with his natural energy, rather than exposed it by careful analysis. He had declared the depths of its evils, and the powerlessness of its remedies; he had thrown a blasting light on those things which men are wont to call the guarantees of civil society; and by proving all natural virtue and all human remedies unworthy of confidence, had sought to drive them upon faith by pursuing them with despair. Rochefoucauld, prosecuting his pitiless analysis of the disguises of the human heart, and leading his readers to suspect their most natural emotions, had well-nigh taken away the desire of ingenuous virtue, by proving its impossibility. But La Bruyère endeavored to make the most of our nature, such as it is; to render men better, even with their imperfections; and to assist them by a moral code proportioned to their strength, or rather to their weakness. However his philosophy might and must have been elevated and purified by the genius of Christianity, it is unquestionably based professedly on reason, and not on revelation. Yet such was the predominance of the religious feeling in the age of Louis XIV., that this author, in his last edition of the *Caractères*, offered the following explanation, which, it must be admitted, is more prudent than true:—



Les hommes de goût, pieux et éclairés, dit-il, n'ont-ils pas observé que de seize chapitres qui composent le livre des *Caractères*, il y en a quinze qui, s'attachant à découvrir le faux et le ridicule qui se rencontrent dans les objets des passions et des attachements humains, ne tendent qu'à ruiner les obstacles qui affaiblissent d'abord, et qui éteignent ensuite dans tous les hommes, la connaissance de Dieu; qu'ainsi ils ne sont que des préparations au seizième et dernier chapitre, où l'athéisme est attaqué et peut-être confondu, où les preuves de Dieu, une partie du moins de celles que les faibles hommes sont capables de recevoir dans leur esprit, sont apportées, où la providence de Dieu est défendu contre l'insulte et les plaintes des libertins?

Such an explanation speaks volumes of the necessity that there was in those days for recognising Christianity as the basis of virtue, and of the difficulties which an author had to encounter in setting up a system of godless philosophy; but it ought not to deceive any one as to the real character and tendency of La Bruyère's work. It is in the *Essai sur les Moyens de Conserver la Paix avec les Hommes*, by NICOLE the Port Royalist, that we must look for a system of truly Christian ethics, derived from the precepts of revelation, and elegant as to their style, though displaying little original talent.

The only speculative philosopher worthy of mention in this age is MALEBRANCHE. He was a disciple of Descartes, and maintained the doctrines of his great master on the method of reasoning, on the nature of the soul, and on the automatism of the lower animals. But instead of admitting innate ideas, he held that we see all in Deity, and that it is only by our spiritual union with the Being who knows all things that we know anything. He proved the existence of the body from revelation, denied the action of the soul on the body, and even the action of corporeal substances on each other, attributing their reciprocal influences entirely to divine intervention. He professed optimism, explained the existence of evil by saying that Deity acts only as a universal cause, and founded all

morality on the idea of order. Such are the leading doctrines of Malebranche's *Recherche à la Vérité*, and such his effort to reconcile philosophy with revelation; a task which would have been deemed superfluous either in the preceding or the following age. His paradoxical opinions on several points of philosophy and theology, met with lively opposition. Arnaud disputed his views on the nature of grace; Regis, those on motion; and Laing, those on divine love. His philosophy is now exploded, and his works little read; though they are referred to as models of style in this department of authorship.

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#### XVII.—HISTORY AND MEMOIRS.

BOSSUET, MEZERAY, ST. REAL, FLEURY, ROLLIN, DE RETZ, ST. SIMON, COUNT HAMILTON.

HISTORY attained no very high degree of excellence during this period. We have already alluded to the *Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle* of BOSSUET, which is not so much a history as a religious commentary on the designs of the Supreme Being respecting the world—a sermon, with general history for the text. At a somewhat earlier date, MEZERAY (1610–1683) was led from the publication of political pamphlets to those studies which suggested the compilation of a history of France. His work, which brings the history down to the reign of Louis XIII., appeared in three folio volumes between 1643 and 1651, and obtained for him a high reputation; the style is clear, facile, and nervous, and the spirit which pervades it bold and independent; but the author either had not access to authentic records, or did not carefully consult them, and hence the facts are not to be depended upon. In like manner, ST. REAL'S *Histoire de la Conjuration des Espagnols contre Venise*, is little else than a historical romance.

The epithet of "judicious" has become inseparably connected with the name of the Abbé FLEURY (1640–1723), tutor under Fénelon to the grandchildren of Louis XIV. His ecclesiastical history, reaching from the first establishment of Christianity to the year 1414, was pronounced by Voltaire the best work of the kind that had ever appeared.

An author of similar stamp was the good ROLLIN (1661–1741), who being forced to quit the professor's chair from a suspicion of being infected with Jansenism, devoted his declining years to the composition of works, chiefly historical, for the instruction of young people. His *Ancient History* is familiar in our language, and was long the first, if not the only book on the subject that was put into the hands of English youth. In point of date, it scarcely belongs to the age under review; but it does completely in style and spirit, being a work of the same class as Bossuet's universal and Fleury's ecclesiastical history—more remarkable for the excellence of its intentions, than for the display of strictly historical talent.

The truth is, that the writers of this period having no knowledge of political science, viewed history chiefly as a vehicle for fine composition, and knew no higher ambition than that of imitating the ancients, to which some, as in the examples adduced, added the desire to derive from it illustrations of moral and religious truth. They may, therefore, be said to have marked rather than filled a void in French literature.

The writers of Memoirs were more happy. At an earlier period—that is, in the sixteenth century—BRANTOME, a gentleman attached to the suite of Charles IX. and Henry III., having met with all the great people of his day in France, and also many of those in other countries, employed his declining years in describing the men and manners he had observed. His *Mémoires* are classified as *Vies des Hommes Illustres et*

*Grands Capitaines Français ; des Grands Capitaines Etrangers ; des Dames Illustres ; des Dames Galantes ;* and notwithstanding some anecdotes which are considered apocryphal, they are admitted to embody but too faithful a representation of that singular mixture of elegance and grossness, of superstition and impiety, of chivalrous feelings and licentious morals, which characterized the sixteenth century.

Then there had been the DUKE of SULLY, the skilful financier of Henry IV., in the earlier half of the seventeenth century. He left valuable memoirs of the stirring events of his day, but in a somewhat singular form, as under the supposition that his secretaries were relating to him the history of his own life.

In the period now under review, appears the CARDINAL DE RETZ (1614–1679), who took so active a part in the agitations of the Fronde, and left *Mémoires*, which were published for the first time in 1717. They embody the enlarged views of the true historian, as well as the details of the narrator, and breathe the impetuous spirit of a man whose native element is civil commotion, and who looks on the chieftainship of a party as worthy to engage the best powers both of his head and heart.

Before introducing a specimen of his work, it is proper to say something about its style. The classical language of French literature had been formed by the professional authors, who had confined it within somewhat narrow bounds, and guarded its purity with the most jealous care. But parallel to the limpid stream which flowed through their works, there rolled another, which arose from a different source—rough and headlong, it is true, but abundant and powerful. It was the language of those practical people—men of camps and courts—who were too much out of the sphere of literary interests



to make a conscience of classical forms of speech : men who lived near enough the masses to borrow what was picturesque in their phraseology ; distant enough not to adopt what was vulgar ; and high enough to affect more or less independence of the *ipse dixit* of literary legislators. Many of these aristocratic writers availed themselves of such a position only to revel in grotesque inaccuracies, and “to defy the grammar to which even kings yielded subjection.” In glancing over their works, we easily detect this feudal pride assuming the privilege of framing its own locutions, and even orthography, and appearing to glory in slovenliness and barbarism. But when this somewhat irregular style is employed by men of real talent, as the Cardinal de Retz and the Duc de St. Simon, it appears as a superior dialect, and exhibits phases of the language no less distinct than those furnished by a different era.

In introducing, therefore, some passages from Cardinal de Retz, we apprise the reader that his is not classical French ; that it abounds with negligences and irregularities which would have shocked the *littérateurs* of the day ; but it affords a fine specimen of this bold and independent mode of taking the shortest way to the end in view ; employing whatever locutions are most expressive, or most at hand, and trampling on conventionalities whenever they were found inconvenient.

The following graphic sketches of Richelieu and Mazarin are from his account of the war of the Fronde.

Le cardinal de Richelieu avait de la naissance. Sa jeunesse jeta des étincelles de son mérite. Il se distingua en Sorbonne ; on remarqua de fort bonne heure qu'il avait de la force et de la vivacité dans l'esprit. Il prenait d'ordinaire très-bien son parti. Il était homme de parole où un grand intérêt ne l'obligeait pas au contraire ; et en cela il n'oubliait rien pour sauver les apparences de la bonne foi. Il n'était pas libéral, mais il donnait plus qu'il ne promettait, et il assaisonnait admirablement ses bienfaits. Il aimait la gloire beaucoup plus que la morale ne le permet ; mais il faut avouer qu'il n'abusait qu'à proportion de son mérite de la dispense qu'il avait prise sur le

point de l'exces de son ambition. Il n'avait ni l'esprit ni le cœur au-dessus des périls ; il n'avait ni l'un ni l'autre au-dessous ; et l'on peut dire qu'il en prévint davantage par sa sagacité qu'il n'en surmonta par sa fermeté. Il était bon ami ; il eût même souhaité d'être aimé du public ; mais quoiqu'il eût la civilité, l'extérieur et d'autres parties propres à cet effet, il n'en eut jamais je ne sais quoi qui est encore en cette matière plus requis qu'en toute autres. Il anéantissait par son pouvoir et par son faste royal la majesté personnelle du roi ; mais il remplait avec tant de dignité les fonctions de la royauté, qu'il fallait n'être pas du vulgaire pour ne pas confondre le bien et le mal de ce fait. Il distinguait plus judicieusement qu'homme du monde entre le mal et le pis, entre le bien et le mieux ; ce qui est une grande qualité à un ministre. Il s'impatientait trop facilement dans les petites choses qui étaient les préalables des grandes ; mais ce défaut, qui vient de la sublimité de l'esprit, est toujours joint à des lumières qui le suppléent. Il avait assez de religion pour ce monde ; il allait au bien, ou par inclination, ou par bon sens, toutes les fois que son intérêt ne le portait point au mal, qu'il connaissait parfaitement quand il le faisait. Il ne considérait l'état que pour sa vie ; mais jamais ministre n'a eu plus d'application à faire croire qu'il en ménageait l'avenir. Enfin il faut confesser que tous ses vices ont été de ceux qui ne peuvent avoir pour instruments que de grandes vertus.

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Le cardinal Mazarin était d'un caractère tout contraire. Sa naissance était basse, et son enfance honteuse. Au sortir du Colisée il apprit à piper, ce qui lui attira des coups de bâton d'un orfèvre de Rome, appelé Moretto. Il fut capitaine d'infanterie en Valteline ; et Bagni, qui était son général, m'a dit qu'il ne passa dans sa guerre, qui ne fut que de trois mois, que pour un escroc. Il eut la nonciature extraordinaire en France par la faveur du cardinal Antoine Barberini, qui ne s'acquerrait pas dans ce temps-là par de bons moyens. Il plut à Chavigny par les contes libertins d'Italie, et par Chavigny à Richelieu, qui le fit cardinal, par le même esprit, à ce qu'on a cru, qui obligea Auguste à laisser à Tibère la succession de l'empire. La pourpre ne l'empêcha pas de demeurer valet sous Richelieu. La reine l'ayant choisi, faute d'autre, ce qui est vrai, quoi qu'on en dise, il parut d'abord l'original de *Trivelino principe*. La fortune l'ayant ébloui et tous les autres, il s'érigea et on l'érigea en Richelieu ; mais il n'en eut que l'impudence de l'imitation. Il se fit de la honte de tout ce dont l'autre s'était fait de l'honneur. Il se moqua de la religion. Il

promit tout parce qu'il ne voulut rien tenir. Il ne fut ni doux ni cruel, parce qu'il ne se souvenait ni des bienfaits, ni des injures. Il s'aimait trop, ce qui est le naturel des âmes lâches; il se craignait trop peu, ce qui est le caractère de ceux qui n'ont pas le soin de leur réputation. Il prévoyait assez bien le mal, parce qu'il avait souvent peur, mais il n'y remédiait pas à proportion, parce qu'il n'avait pas tant de prudence que de peur. Il avait de l'esprit, de l'insinuation, de l'enjouement, des manières; mais le vilain cœur paraissait toujours au travers, et au point que ces qualités eurent dans l'adversité tout l'air du ridicule, et ne perdirent pas dans la prospérité celui de la fourberie. Il porta le filoutage dans le ministère, ce qui n'est arrivé qu'à lui, et le filoutage faisait que le ministère, même heureux et absolu, ne lui seyait pas bien, et que le mépris s'y glissa, qui est la maladie la plus dangereuse d'un état, et dont la contagion se répand le plus aisément et le plus promptement du chef dans les membres.

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Comme il marchait sur les pas du cardinal de Richelieu, qui avait achevé de détruire toutes les anciennes maximes de l'état, il suivait son chemin, qui était de tous côtés bordé de précipices, que le cardinal de Richelieu n'avait pas ignorés: mais il ne se servait pas des appuis par lesquels le cardinal de Richelieu avait assuré sa marche. J'expliquerai ce peu de paroles, qui comprend beaucoup de choses, par un exemple. Le cardinal de Richelieu avait affecté d'abaisser les corps, mais il n'avait pas oublié de ménager les particuliers. Cette idée suffit pour vous faire concevoir tout le reste.

The DUC DE ST. SIMON was another of those who made no pretensions to classical writing, and would have disdained to be "an academic subject," as he himself expressed it. He valued himself on being one of the last of the great lords of France, but did not dream of being esteemed one of the greatest writers of the seventeenth century. Such, however, he was in his own way. However far his style may be from classical, it is that of a man of genius. If the form in which he begins a sentence does not suit the thought he would bring out, he forces the rule, or bends or extends it, but scorns to go back; makes his beginning nolens-volens agree with the end; and "hence," say French critics, "some errors more or



less grating to the ear, but hence also some happy discoveries and veritable graces of style." St. Simon himself felt that he ought to have composed more correctly; but this would have involved rewriting the whole—a task to which he was unequal, he said, and which he feared might prove a thankless one after all.

This improvisatore talent the Duke de St. Simon shared in common with another remarkable writer of the same period—Madame de Sévigné; though the latter, from greater cultivation and less impetuosity, was more correct with the same rapidity. Both avowed their incorrigibility. "I never had the courage to read over my letters," said Madame de Sévigné, "for I never altered them except for the worse." And so St. Simon, in his conclusion: "I have never been able to cure myself of writing rapidly." Great vivacity seems scarcely compatible with the labor of accuracy; and writers of this sort, in trying to examine their thoughts too closely, either dissipate them altogether, or lose confidence in themselves. In seeking the perfection of deep thinkers, they lose those improvisatore beauties which Molière so poetically expresses as constituting the superiority of fresco over oil painting:—

La paresse de l'huile, allant avec lenteur,  
 Du plus tardif génie attend la pesanteur; \* \* \*  
 Et sur cette peinture on peut, pour faire mieux,  
 Revenir, quand on veut, avec de nouveaux yeux.  
 Mais la fresque est pressante, et veut, sans complaisance,  
 Qu'un peintre s'accommode à son impatience.  
 Avec elle il n'est point de retour à tenter,  
 Et tout, au premier coup, se doit exécuter.

All the styles of the seventeenth century are found in St. Simon. Here is the long period of Descartes loaded with incidents, but made clear by repetition; the boldness and emphasis of Bossuet; the high coloring of Bruyère; and the easy familiar gossip of Madame de Sévigné. His language has



been compared to a torrent, which appears somewhat encumbered by the débris which it carries, yet makes its way with no less rapidity. It seems to pertain more to the reign of Louis XIII., than to the middle of the eighteenth century, which is nearly its date.

But if the language of this author is that of the seventeenth century, with the shades we have marked, his spirit is widely different. When St. Simon appeared at court, the splendors of the reign of Louis XIV. were waning; the great generals and the great ministers had passed away; the king remained still majestic in himself, but without his cortège of superior men; now surrounded by upstarts chosen by caprice, or thrown upon him by chance, flattering him in his passion for absolute rule, and in the greatest fault of his life—his marriage with Madame de Maintenon. St. Simon received impressions of the decline no less strongly than the men of the first half of this reign had received those of the greatness of the monarchy. He was in political opinion a reformer; and in this respect resembled Fénélon, from whom he differs so much in style. Like the venerable ecclesiastic, too, he was warmly attached to the Duke of Burgundy, and conceived high hopes of the advantages likely to accrue to France when this prince should hold the reins of government.

Our extract is from his portrait of this prince:—

Ce prince, héritier nécessaire, puis présomptif de la couronne, naquit terrible, et sa première jeunesse fit trembler; dur et colère jusqu'aux derniers emportements, et jusque contre les choses inanimées; impétueux avec fureur; incapable de souffrir la moindre résistance, même des heures et des éléments, sans entrer dans des fougues à faire craindre que tout ne se rompît dans son corps; opiniâtre à l'excès; passionné pour toute espèce de volupté; il aimait le vin, la bonne chère, la chasse avec fureur, la musique avec une sorte de ravissement, et le jeu encore, où il ne pouvait supporter d'être vaincu et où le danger avec lui était extrême; enfin, livré à toutes les passions et transporté de tous les plaisirs; souvent farouche,

naturellement porté à la cruauté; barbare en railleries et à produire les ridicules avec une justesse qui assommait. De la hauteur des cieux il ne regardait les hommes que comme des atomes avec qui il n'avait aucune ressemblance quels qu'ils fussent. A peine MM. ses frères lui paraissaient-ils intermédiaires entre lui et le genre humain, quoiqu'on eût toujours affecté de les élever tous trois ensemble dans une égalité parfaite. L'esprit, la pénétration brillaient en lui de toutes parts. Jusque dans ses furies, ses réponses étonnaient; ses raisonnements tendaient toujours au juste et au profond, même dans ses emportements. Il se jouait des connaissances les plus abstraites. L'étendue et la vivacité de son esprit étaient prodigieuses, et l'empêchaient de s'appliquer à une seule chose à la fois, jusqu'à l'en rendre incapable. La nécessité de le laisser dessiner en étudiant, à quoi il avait beaucoup de goût et d'adresse, et sans quoi son étude était infructueuse, a peut-être beaucoup nui à sa taille.

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Place we now in contrast with these thoroughly serious men, the frivolous COUNT HAMILTON (1646–1720), narrating the rough adventures of his brother-in-law, the Chevalier de Gramont, and the gallantries of Charles II. of England. This Hamilton, a scion of the noble family of the same name in Scotland, and attached to the cause of the royal Stuarts, spent his childhood in France, where his father was sharing the exile of Charles II. He returned, however, to England with this monarch at the Restoration (1660), and it was about two years afterwards that the Chevalier de Gramont went to London as an exile from the court of France, and formed an attachment to Miss Hamilton, whom he afterward married.\* Hamilton filled some offices in Ireland under James II., accompanied him to France

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\* This was believed to be the original of Molière's comedy of *Le Mariage Forcé*. Gramont was leaving the court of England without bringing to a consummation the matrimony he had pledged with Miss Hamilton. The young lady's brothers pursued him, and overtaking him near Dover, called out, "Count Gramont, have you forgotten nothing in London?" "Oh, I beg your pardon," said the count, "I forgot to marry your sister!" Whereupon he returned with them, and the nuptials took place. This anecdote does not appear in the *Mémoires*.

on his abdication, and became one of the ornaments of his little court at St. Germain. It was here that he amused himself with writing his recollections of the court of Charles II., to which it is believed he has added some inventions of his own. Though under the title of the *Mémoires du Comte de Gramont*, it embraces a number of scandalous adventures, by no means connected with the hero. "Of all frivolous books," says La Harpe, "this is the most pleasing and the most ingenious; it is the work of a lightsome spirit, accustomed, in the corruption of court-life, to recognise no vice but the ridiculous; to cover the most depraved morals with an elegant gloss; and relate all in a mirthful and pleasant tone. The art of narrating little things, so as to make them appear of consequence, is here found in perfection."

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#### XVIII.—ROMANCE AND LETTER-WRITING.

MADAME DE LA FAYETTE—FENELON—SEVIGNE—MAINTENON.

THE growth of kingly power, the external order which it established, and the civilization which followed in its train, restrained the development of public life, and increased the interest of social relations. From this new state of things, combined with a remaining taste for heroic adventure, arose a modified kind of romance, in which elevated sentiments replaced the impossible achievements we have adverted to as characteristic of mediæval fiction, and the military exploits of Madame de Scudéry's tales. MADAME DE LA FAYETTE introduced that kind of romance, in which the absorbing interest is that of conflicting passion, and the events of the external history are but the occasions for developing the inward life of thought and feeling. Hers, too, was the first

attempt at depicting manners as they really were, and relating natural events with gracefulness, instead of inventing such as never had or could have an existence. Like her predecessor, she published her first romance under the name of a male friend, and ventured not to appear as an author till her work had been favorably received. The experiment was completely successful, and this more natural style of novel-writing became highly popular. When we say popular, we mean only, of course, that it was relished in the high-born circles for which novels were then written; for Madame de la Fayette would have shrunk with horror from the idea of one of her pages being turned over by a citizen's thumb. The same aristocratic feeling ascended the pulpit with the clergy, the higher places in the church being filled with scions of noble families.

We are thus led to mention the illustrious FENELON,\* one of the few authors of this age who pertained exclusively to no one class. He appeared as a divine in his *Sermons ou Œuvres Spirituelles*, and *Maximes des Saints*; as a rhetorician in *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence*; as a moralist in *L'Education des Filles*; as a politician in *Examen de la Conscience d'un Roi*; and it may be said that all these characters are combined in *Télémaque*, which has procured for him a widely spread fame, and which obliges us therefore to place him, despite his well-maintained piety, among the romancers.

He was the son of an ancient and noble family, and born at the château of Fénélon in Périgord, in the year 1651. Educated in retirement, under the eye of a virtuous father, and amidst models of ancient Greece, his naturally fine taste had the most favorable opportunity for development. Being designed for the church, and summoned to Paris by his uncle, the Marquis of Fénélon, in order to prosecute his theological

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\* See Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia.



studies, he underwent, at fifteen years of age, a similar trial to that of Bossuet in extempore preaching, though before a less distinguished auditory than that at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The éclat of premature fame, which had gathered round him before his nineteenth year, alarmed the marquis, who, to save his protégé from the seductions to which he might be exposed, placed him in the Seminary of St. Sulpice, where he spent five years in religious silence and obedience, in study and meditation. Here he took holy orders; and in the fervor of his religious zeal, formed the design of consecrating his life to foreign missions, but was afterwards induced to embrace one which was deemed no less useful—that of the instruction of the new converts from Protestantism. His labors in this sphere prepared him for writing his treatise *De l'Education des Filles* for the Duchess of Beauvilliers, the pious mother of a numerous family. In this work he insists on the importance of the female character, and the urgent reasons there are for cultivating female understanding. “Women,” he says, “were designed, by their native elegance and gentleness, to render domestic life endeared to man; to render virtue attractive to children; to diffuse order and grace around them, and impart to society its highest polish. No attainment can be too elevated for beings designed to accomplish purposes at once so useful and salutary, and every means should be used to invigorate their native elegance by principle and culture.”

About this time, Fénélon formed an intimate acquaintance with Bossuet, whom he regarded with great veneration, and whose steps in religious controversy he endeavored to follow, though with greater moderation. The talent which he displayed in this respect induced Louis XIV., at the recommendation of Bossuet, to appoint him to a new mission for the conversion of Protestants in Poitou. Fénélon accepted the charge, but on condition that he should have no soldiery as his auxiliaries; and, moreover, that his colleagues should be men

of his own selection—men who would gain converts only by persuasion and entreaty. The importance which was attached to such missions, and the success which attended Fénelon's labors, brought him into considerable notice, and now a new sphere was opened for his talents. The grandson of Louis XIV. was emerging from childhood, and the high reputation of Fénelon, seconded by the interest of Madame de Maintenon, obtained for him the important situation of preceptor to the young prince, to whom M. de Beauvilliers was guardian. The two friends entered with enthusiasm on the task allotted to them: they saw eye to eye, and history scarcely records such another instance of harmonious effort in a similar cause. They looked upon the happiness of France as bound up in the education of its future sovereign, and believed that all this was now in their hands; their beau-idéal of a virtuous monarch and a happy people should now be realized. Alas for human hopes!

Fénelon studied his pupil's peculiar disposition, and adapted himself to it: he conquered his pride by gentleness, and his vehemence by silence: excited his desire for knowledge by conversation, and satisfied it by information conveyed in the most pleasing manner. We owe his fables, many of his dialogues, and his great work, *Télémaque*, to the plan he had laid for forming the mind and character of this young prince, as the expectant sovereign of France.

Five years passed thus without the amiable preceptor either asking or receiving any distinguishing mark of the royal favor. The king now bestowed on him the archbishopric of Cambray, for which he offered thanks; but at the same time he represented to his majesty, that he could not regard that gift as a reward, whose operation must be to separate him from his pupil; whereupon the king gave him leave to reside at court three months in the year, which was the utmost absenteeism that the canons of the church allowed.

It was shortly after this arrangement that Fénélon became involved in controversy about the doctrines of Madame Guyon, to which we have referred in our notice of Bossuet, and that he was entirely banished to Cambray. His modest submission and truly apostolic virtues would probably have procured his restoration; but an unforeseen event occurred more than ever to irritate against him the mind of Louis. The *Télémaque*, which he had composed, as it is believed, with the intention of its becoming a manual for the young prince on his entrance upon manhood, was printed by a bookseller of Paris, through the unfaithfulness of the man who had been directed to transcribe the manuscript. Before it was ready for publication, it was seized and interdicted; but it found its way into Holland, went through numerous editions, and was translated into every language of Europe. Louis XIV., who had never greatly liked Fénélon, and had long designated him as *un bel esprit chimérique*, considered the spirit of the book as a reproach to the spirit of his reign; while the courtiers increased his anger by discovering particular applications of the personages in the tale. Meanwhile Fénélon devoted himself with zealous assiduity to the care of his diocese. His extensive benevolence, his unbounded sympathy, his calm sense of justice, and his easy accessibility to the poor as well as the rich, won the hearts of all; and long after his death, there were old men who would point, with tears in their eyes, to the wooden chair in the cottage, which, in their boyhood, they had seen occupied by the venerable archbishop. One man of high birth, who had been introduced into his palace, ostensibly as high vicar, but really as a spy, was so touched by the blameless life he witnessed, that he threw himself at Fénélon's feet, confessed all, and then, unable to meet his eye, withdrew in shame, and lived ever after in exile and obscurity.

The Duke of Burgundy had been forbidden to hold any intercourse with his beloved preceptor; but it would seem that



he found means of breaking through the restriction, and of assuring him of his continued friendship, and his desire to be under his instruction. In his reply, Fénelon says: "In the name of God, let prayer nourish your soul, as food nourishes your body. Do not make long prayers; let them spring from the heart, rather than from the understanding; little from reasoning, much from simple affection; few ideas in consecutive order, but many acts of faith and love. . . . My greatest sorrow has been not to see you; but I carry you continually before God into a presence more intimate than that of the senses. I would give a thousand lives, like a drop of water, to see you such as God would have you to be."

During the war of the Spanish Succession, Fénelon, living on a frontier exposed to the incursions of the enemy, devoted himself to alleviating the sufferings of the people. In one of his journeys, he met a peasant in deep affliction: the enemy had driven away his cow, on which his family was dependent for support, and his life was in danger if he went to seek it. On hearing this, the archbishop set off in pursuit, found the cow, and drove it home himself to the peasant's cottage. The enemy—that is, the English, Germans, and Dutch—were as eager to display their veneration for him as the officers of the French army pointedly avoided him, out of compliment to their wrathful sovereign. They sent detachments to guard his fields, and to escort his harvest into the city; but he refused military protection for his own person, and, with no other attendants than a few ecclesiastics, he traversed regions devastated by war, carrying peace and succor in his pastoral visits.

When the Duke of Burgundy headed the army in Flanders in 1702, and again in 1708, he renewed his personal intercourse with the archbishop, and during the interval they corresponded with freedom. Then, when the dauphin, the father of the Duke of Burgundy, died, the supple nobles began to



pay court to Fénélon, concluding that he would be all-powerful in the event of his pupil's accession to the throne. But Fénélon heeded their attentions as little as he had done their neglect. Their expectations were not to be realized; the young dauphin died in 1712, and in the following year the Duke of Beauvilliers. Fénélon received the intelligence with mingled grief and resignation; declaring, that though all his ties were broken, and that nothing hereafter would attach him to earth, yet he would not move a finger to recall the prince to life against the will of God. After this event the king's heart appeared to be softened; the sting of envy was in part, at least, removed, when there was no fear of the impersonation in a successor of the precepts of Fénélon. After burning with his own hands all the papers and letters of his which were found among the effects of the Duke of Burgundy, he was about to recall the venerable ecclesiastic to court, when death removed him from witnessing the late repentance of the monarch (1715 A. D.) Louis outlived him but a few months.

Two years after the death of Fénélon, his heirs published the *Télémaque*, complete in two volumes. Our quotation is from one of its most admired passages.

#### LES CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES.

C'est dans ce lieu qu'habitaient tous les bons rois qui avaient jusqu'alors gouverné sagement les hommes : ils étaient séparés du reste des justes. Comme les méchants princes souffraient dans le Tartare des supplices infiniment plus rigoureux que les autres coupables d'une condition privée, aussi les bons rois jouissaient dans les Champs Elysées d'un bonheur infiniment plus grand que celui du reste des hommes qui avaient aimé la vertu sur la terre.

Télémaque s'avança vers ces rois, qui étaient dans des bocages odoriférants, sur des gazons toujours renaissants et fleuris : mille petits ruisseaux d'une onde pure arrosaient ces beaux lieux, et y faisaient sentir une délicieuse fraîcheur : un nombre infini d'oiseaux faisaient résonner ces bocages de leurs doux chants. On voyait tout ensemble les fleurs du printemps qui naissaient sous les pas, avec les plus riches

fruits de l'automne qui pendaient des arbres. Là jamais on ne ressentit les ardeurs de la furieuse canicule : là jamais les noirs aquilons n'osèrent souffler, ni faire sentir les rigueurs de l'hiver. Ni la guerre altérée de sang, ni la cruelle envie qui mord d'une dent venimeuse, et qui porte des vipères entortillées dans son sein et autour de ses bras, ni les jalousies, ni les défiances, ni la crainte, ni les vains désirs, n'approchent jamais de cet heureux séjour de la paix. Le jour n'y finit point ; et la nuit, avec ses sombres voiles, y est inconnue ; une lumière pure et douce se répand autour des corps de ces hommes justes, et les environne de ses rayons comme d'un vêtement. Cette lumière n'est point semblable à la lumière sombre qui éclaire les yeux des misérables mortels, et qui n'est que ténèbres ; c'est plutôt une gloire céleste qu'une lumière : elle pénètre plus subtilement les corps les plus épais que les rayons du soleil ne pénètrent le plus pur cristal : elle n'éblouit jamais ; au contraire, elle fortifie les yeux et porte dans le fond de l'âme je ne sais quelle sérénité : c'est d'elle seule que les hommes bienheureux sont nourris ; elle sort d'eux et elle y entre ; elle les pénètre et s'incorpore à eux comme les aliments s'incorporent à nous. Ils la voient, ils la sentent, ils la respirent ; elle fait naître en eux une source intarissable de paix et de joie : ils sont plongés dans cet abîme de délices comme les poissons dans la mer ; ils ne veulent plus rien ; ils ont tout sans rien avoir, car ce goût de lumière pure apaise la faim de leur cœur ; tous leurs désirs sont rassasiés, et leur plénitude les élève au-dessus de tout ce que les hommes vides et affamés cherchent sur la terre : toutes les délices qui les environnent ne leur sont rien, parce que le comble de leur félicité, qui vient du dedans, ne leur laisse aucun sentiment pour tout ce qu'ils voient de délicieux au dehors ; ils sont tels que les dieux, qui, rassasiés de nectar et d'ambrosie, ne daigneraient pas se nourrir des viandes grossières qu'on leur présenterait à la table la plus exquise des hommes mortels. Tous les maux s'enfuient loin de ces lieux tranquilles : la mort, la maladie, la pauvreté, la douleur, les regrets, les remords, les craintes, les espérances même, qui coûtent souvent autant de peines que les craintes, les divisions, les dégoûts, les dépits, ne peuvent y avoir aucune entrée.

After a further description of the moral beauties of this abode, in harmony with the external, Telemachus is represented as searching in vain for his father, and being accosted

by an old man, who reveals himself as the grandfather of Ulysses, and announces that the object of his search is still alive. The old man concludes with this solemn reflection and admonition :

Ainsi les hommes passent comme les fleurs qui s'épanouissent le matin, et qui le soir sont flétries et foulées aux pieds. Les générations des hommes s'écoulent comme les ondes d'un fleuve rapide ; rien ne peut arrêter le temps, qui entraîne après lui tout ce qui paraît le plus immobile. Toi-même, ô mon fils ! mon cher fils ! toi-même, qui jouis maintenant d'une jeunesse si vive et si féconde en plaisirs, souviens-toi que ce bel âge n'est qu'une fleur qui sera presque aussitôt séchée qu'éclosoe ; tu te verras changé insensiblement : les grâces riantes, les doux plaisirs qui t'accompagnent, la force, la santé, la joie, s'évanouiront comme un beau songe ; il ne t'en restera qu'un triste souvenir : la vieillesse languissante et ennemie des plaisirs viendra rider ton visage, courber ton corps, affaiblir tes membres, faire tarir dans ton cœur la source de la joie, te dégoûter du présent, te faire craindre l'avenir, te rendre insensible à tout, excepté à la douleur.

Ce temps te paraît éloigné : hélas ! tu te trompes, mon fils ; il se hâte ; le voilà qui arrive : ce qui vient avec tant de rapidité n'est pas loin de toi ; et le présent qui s'enfuit est déjà bien loin, puisqu'il s'anéantit dans le moment que nous parlons, et ne peut plus se rapprocher. Ne compte donc jamais, mon fils, sur le présent ; mais soutiens-toi dans le sentier rude et âpre de la vertu par la vue de l'avenir. Prépare-toi, par des mœurs pures et par l'amour de la justice, une place dans l'heureux séjour de la paix.

*Télémaque* was, in its day, considered a manual for kings, and it became a standard school-book on account of the elegance of its style, the purity of its morality, and the classic tastes it was likely to foster in the youthful mind. Forty or fifty years ago, every boy that learned French in this country had it put into his hand as his first reading-book. But the revolutions of political and religious opinion have cast it into the shade. It is now believed that the welfare of a nation is not to be hoped from a wise and virtuous sovereign managing

an ignorant people as he would a family of helpless children, but from a virtuous and well-instructed people regulating and controlling the operations of the government under which they live.

MADAME DE SEVIGNE\* made no pretensions to authorship. Her letters were written without the slightest idea that they would ever be read except by those to whom they were addressed; but they have immortalized their gifted author, and have been pronounced worthy to occupy an eminent place among the classics of French literature.

Madame de Sévigné was the daughter of the Baron Chantel, a noble of the old feudal times, who fell, it is said, by the hand of Cromwell himself, while defending the Isle of Ré (*Rhe*) against the English in 1628. The little Marie was then only a year and a half old; and her mother also dying while she was yet a child, her education devolved on her maternal uncle, the Abbé de Coulanges, for whom she ever entertained a truly filial affection. We know little of her youthful life, but that her earliest reading was in the interminable romances of Madame de Scudéry; that she pursued more serious studies under Ménage and Chapelle; that she was early introduced to court; and that she was married at eighteen to Henry, Marquis of Sévigné, a gay, extravagant, and dissipated man, of an ancient family in Brittany. Being related to the celebrated Cardinal de Retz, the marquis joined the party of the Fronde in the civil war; madame also became a zealous Frondeuse, and in all her after-life we find traces of the intimacies which were contracted during this stormy period. Her husband was killed in a duel by the Chevalier d'Albret—it is not known on what provocation; and Madame de Sévigné was left a widow at four-and-twenty years of age, with a son and daugh-

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\* See Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia.



ter, who now engrossed all her anxieties. Deeming it necessary for their advancement that she should cultivate the friendship of people in power, and determined, perhaps, still more by her own natural tastes, she continued to live closely surrounded by the court circle of Louis XIV.—a demoralized atmosphere enough, yet no evil breath ever tainted her fair fame. Her cousin, Bussy Rabutin, who dealt abundantly in scandal, rallied her as the only woman in France that could induce her admirers to be satisfied with friendship. Among these was the unfortunate financier Fouquet, whose hand she had refused, but whose fall excited her deepest sympathy. During his trial, Madame de Sévigné reported its progress in letters to M. de Pomponne, who afterwards became minister. The interest and terror which was excited about him appears from the fact, that she masked herself when she went to see him return from the court to the prison of the Bastille, as she herself relates.

Il faut que je vous conte ce que j'ai fait. Imaginez vous que des dames m'ont proposé d'aller dans une maison qui regarde droit dans l'arsenal pour voir revenir notre pauvre ami. J'étais masquée; je l'ai vu venir d'assez loin. M. d'Artagnan étoit auprès de lui; cinquante mousquetaires à trente à quarante pas derrière. Il paroissoit assez réveur. Pour moi, quand je l'ai aperçu, les jambes m'ont tremblé, et le cœur m'a battu si fort, que je ne pouvois plus. En s'approchant de nous pour entrer dans son trou M. d'Artagnan l'a poussé, et lui a fait remarquer que nous étions là. Il nous a donc saluées, et pris cette mine riante que vous lui connoissez. Je ne crois pas qu'il m'a reconnue, mais je vous avoue que j'ai été étrangement saisée quand je l'ai vu entrer dans cette petite porte. Si vous saviez combien on est malheureux quand on a le cœur fait comme je l'ai, je suis assurée que vous auriez pitié de moi; mais je pense que vous n'en êtes pas quitté à meilleur marché de la manière dont je vous connois. J'ai été voir votre chère voisine, je vous plains autant de ne l'avoir plus, que nous nous trouvons heureux de l'avoir. Nous avons bien parlé de notre cher ami: elle a vu Sappho (Mademoiselle de Scudéry) qui lui a redonné du courage. Pour moi, j'irai demain le reprendre

chez elle, car de temps en temps, je sens que j'ai besoin de réconfort : ce n'est pas que l'on ne dise mille choses qui doivent donner de l'espérance ; mais, mon Dieu, j'ai l'imagination si vive, que tout ce qui est incertain me fait mourir.

In 1669, Madame de Sévigné gave her beautiful daughter in marriage to the Count de Grignan, who was obliged soon after to repair to Provence, of which he was lieutenant-governor. The mother deeply felt the separation thus involved, and the only consolation, besides the hope of meeting again, was found in the maintenance of a close and voluminous correspondence with Madame de Grignan. Hence the greater part of the letters which have rendered her name so celebrated.

As for the matter they contain, it is abundantly multifarious. Here we have not only a mother's expostulations with her daughter for her somewhat unmaternal management of her children, and notices of her son—from which we learn that he was cheerful, amiable, a favorite of the best society in Paris, and the best company in the world at home ; sometimes exposed to the dangers of war ; sometimes squandering time and money at court, but always unlucky ; getting no promotion in the army, and having no patience to wait for advancement by court-favor ; at length retiring into the country, obscure, but happy with a quiet, unambitious, but religious wife—but besides, we have sketches of Madame de Sévigné's principal friends—as Madame de la Fayette, M. and Madame de Coulanges, Madame Scarron, and all the principal personages of that brilliant age, who seem to have cultivated her acquaintance although she lived in a kind of disgrace, being excluded from court in consequence, as she supposed, of her early alliance with the Fronde, her friendship for Fouquet, and her Jansenist opinions. All the occurrences, as well as the characters of the day, are touched in these maternal letters ; and so graphic is the pen, and so clear and easy the style, that we seem to live in those brilliant days, and to see

and hear all that was going on. Be it remembered, that these were not the times of newspapers, by which a friend might, as now, with infinitely less labor, transmit such information. Here are great events detailed in the same tone as court-gossip, and court-gossip made as much of as great events—Louis XIV., Turenne, Condé, the wars of France and of the Empire, freely mingled with details of housewifery, projects of marriage, and bills of fare for the official dinners of the *gouvernante* of Provence; the seventeenth century, in short, depicted in the correspondence of two women who knew nothing so important as their own affairs. This ease and versatility—*abandon*, as the French call it—is considered the highest charm of these letters. The death of the Marquis de Turenne, for instance, is thus referred to:—

Ne croyez point, ma fille, que le souvenir de M. de Turenne soit déjà fini dans ce pays-ci: ce fleuve, qui entraîne tout, n'entraîne pas sitôt une telle mémoire; elle est consacrée à l'immortalité. J'étois l'autre jour chez M. de la Rochefoucauld, avec Madame de Lavardin, Madame de la Fayette, et M. de Marsillac. M. le Premier y vint. La conversation dura deux heures sur les divines qualités de ce véritable héros: tous les yeux étoient baignés de larmes, et vous ne sauriez croire comme la douleur de sa perte est profondément gravé dans les cœurs. Nous remarquions une chose, c'est que ce n'est pas depuis sa mort que l'on admire la grandeur de son cœur, l'étendue de ses lumières, et l'élévation de son âme; tout le monde en étoit plein pendant sa vie, et vous pouvez penser ce que fait sa perte par-dessus ce qu'on étoit déjà: enfin, ne croyez point que cette mort soit ici comme celle des autres. Vous pouvez en parler tant qu'il vous plaira, sans croire que la dose de votre douleur l'emporte sur la nôtre. Pour son âme, c'est encore un miracle qui vient de l'estime parfaite qu'on avoit pour lui; il n'est pas tombé dans la tête d'aucun dévot qu'elle ne fut pas en bon état: on ne sauroit comprendre que le mal et le péché pussent être dans son cœur: sa conversion si sincère nous a paru comme un baptême; chacun conte l'innocence de ses mœurs, la pureté de ses intentions, son humilité, éloignée de toute sorte d'affectation; la solide gloire dont il étoit plein, sans faste et sans ostentation; aimant la

vertu pour elle-même, sans se soucier de l'approbation des hommes ; une charité généreuse et chrétienne. Vous ai-je dit comme il l'habilla ce régiment anglois ? il lui coûta quatorze mille francs, et il resta sans argent. Les Anglois ont dit à M. de Lorges qu'ils achèveraient de servir cette campagne, pour venger la mort de M. de Turenne, mais qu'après cela ils se retireraient, ne pouvant obéir à d'autres que lui. Il y avoit de jeunes soldats qui s'impatientoient un peu dans les marais, où ils étoient dans l'eau jusqu'aux genoux ; et les vieux soldats leur disoient "Quoi, vous vous plaignez ! On voit bien que vous ne connoissez pas M. de Turenne : il est plus fâché que nous quand nous sommes mal ; il ne songe, à l'heure qu'il est, qu'à nous tirer d'ici ; il veille quand nous dormons ; c'est notre père : on voit bien que vous êtes jeunes." Et c'est ainsi qu'ils les rassuroient. Tout ce que je vous mande est vrai ; je ne me charge point des fadaises dont on croit faire plaisir aux gens éloignés : c'est abuser d'eux, et je choisis bien plus ce que je vous écris, que ce que je vous dirois, si vous étiez ici. Je reviens à son âme : c'est donc une chose à remarquer, que nul dévot ne s'est avisé de douter que Dieu ne l'eût reçue à bras ouverts, comme une des plus belles et des meilleures qui soient jamais sorties de ses mains. Méditez sur cette confiance générale sur son salut, et vous trouverez que c'est une espèce de miracle qui n'est que pour lui. Vous verrez dans les nouvelles les effets de cette grande perte.

Here is another characteristic passage :—

Vous savez que je suis toujours un peu entêtée de mes lectures. Ceux à qui je parle ont intérêt que je lise de bons livres : celui dont il s'agit présentement, c'est cette Morale de Nicole : il y a un traité sur les moyens d'entretenir la paix entre les hommes, qui me ravit : je n'ai jamais rien vu de plus utile, ni si plein d'esprit et de lumières. Si vous ne l'avez pas lu, lisez-le ; si vous l'avez lu, relisez-le avec une nouvelle attention : je crois que tout le monde s'y trouve ; pour moi, je suis persuadée qu'il a été fait à mon intention ; j'espère aussi d'en profiter ; j'y ferai mes efforts. Vous savez que je ne puis souffrir que les vieilles gens disent, "Je suis trop vieux pour me corriger : " je pardonnerois plutôt aux jeunes gens de dire, "Je suis trop jeune." La jeunesse est si aimable, qu'il faudroit l'adorer, si l'âme et l'esprit étoient aussi parfaits que le corps ; mais quand on n'est plus jeune, c'est alors qu'il faudroit se perfectionner, et tâcher de regagner par les bonnes qualités ce qu'on perd du côté désagréable. Il y a long-



temps que j'ai fait ces réflexions, et pour cette raison je veux tous les jours travailler à mon esprit, à mon âme, à mon cœur, à mes sentimens. Voilà de quoi je suis pleine, et de quoi je remplis cette lettre, n'ayant pas beaucoup d'autres sujets.

A long life seems to have been thus spent by this gifted lady in observing and describing the characters and occurrences of the age of Louis XIV., with the occasional variety of a journey to her estate in Brittany, or a visit to her daughter in Provence, marked only by a blank space in her correspondence. She died after a short illness at the age of seventy, leaving, in the circle of friendship, a gap which could not easily be filled.

Considerable interest attaches, likewise, to the letters of MADAME DE MAINTENON, a lady whose life presents singular contrasts, worthy of the times. She was born (1635) in the prison of Mirt, where her parents were incarcerated for their adherence to the Protestant religion, and was early left an orphan. After having been herself first a Catholic and then a Calvinist, she finally attached herself to the former persuasion, and became distinguished for a devotional character. She lived in deep poverty till the poet Scarron, though aged and infirm, united himself to her in marriage for the sake of affording her support and protection. Her house was for some time the rendezvous of all that was most intellectual in Parisian society; and on Scarron's death she was saved from relapsing into destitution by the continuance of his pension of 2000 francs to her as his widow. Being afterwards intrusted by Louis XIV. privately to educate the children of Madame de Montespan, she gradually superseded that lady in his affections; he bestowed on her the estate of Maintenon (1674), and secretly married her after the death of the queen, as she declined, on religious grounds, to sustain any relation unconsecrated by the church's blessing. The archbishop of Paris, and the minister who witnessed the ceremony, solemnly

pledged the monarch never to avow it, and, it is said, had no small difficulty in keeping him to his promise. To the influence of this lady is attributed much that was inauspicious in the latter part of Louis's reign—the combination of ascetic devotion and religious bigotry with flagrant immorality; the appointment of unskilful generals and weak-minded ministers; the persecution of the Jansenists; and, above all, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had secured religious freedom to the Protestants.

Here ended what French critics call their purely literary literature. Thus far it had been its own end, rather than a means for the accomplishment of ulterior objects—the master, not the servant; henceforth it was to sustain a new vocation.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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### XIX.—THE DAWN OF SCEPTICISM.

CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SPIRIT OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND THAT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—TRANSITION—BAYLE—J. B. ROUSSEAU—CHAU-LIEU—LE SAGE—PREVOST—FONTENELLE—LA MOTTE.

IN the age which has just passed under review, we have seen religion, antiquity, and the monarchy of Louis XIV., each exercising a distinct and powerful influence over the youthful buoyancy of French genius, which cheerfully submitted to their chastening and restraining power. Under these circumstances, a school of taste and eloquence had been formed, which gave law to the rest of Europe, and constituted France the leading spirit of the age. On the other hand, the dominant influences of the eighteenth century were a sceptical philosophy, a preference for modern literatures, and a rage for political reform.

The transition, however, was not sudden or immediate. Even as in the order of the material universe changes the most complete are brought about by insensible degrees, so this revolution in the world of mind was at first gradual; a thousand symptoms had announced its approach, and it darkened on the world by successive shades. The two eras, however unlike each other, meet at certain points, and there are certain works which exhibit the characteristics of both. It is this

transition period which we are now more particularly to notice, or rather those transition works which occupy the midway position between the submissive and religious age of Louis XIV., and the daring infidelity and republicanism of the eighteenth century.

According to this moral chronology, the eighteenth century began with the first timid protestation against the splendid monarchy of Louis XIV., or the domination of the Romish Church, or the classical authority of antiquity; and it ended when words came to deeds in the sanguinary Revolution of 1789. It is too easy to mark the steps of this progress.

When the first generation of great men who sunned themselves under the glance of Louis XIV. had passed away, there were found none to succeed them. The same influence gave birth to no rising genius of similar kind, and the glory of the monarch began to fade as the noble cortège disappeared. The obedience and respect around him continued the same as ever, but the admiration and enthusiasm were no more. At the commencement of his reign he had dazzled all who approached him; and the feelings of those who immediately surrounded the throne spread throughout the whole country. Towards the close, the courtiers first abated their adoration. It would have been difficult, indeed, for young princes and nobles to maintain their veneration for a king who, while exacting regularity of morals from them, did himself, in the face of the country, and despite the most sacred laws, bring forward as his children the offspring of a double adultery; a king who evinced his religious zeal by banishing the Protestants, and persecuting the last remnants of the Port Royalists, and who blushed not to wear in the most public manner the yoke of a woman whose character might have fitted her to govern a convent, but not to reign over an empire. Though these inconsistencies were somewhat veiled under imposing appearances of rigorous devotion, and though the misfortunes which resulted



from these errors were borne with resignation, it is easy to see that the new generation, which had not shared the glory and prosperity of the old monarch, and was not subjugated by the recollections of his early splendor, was not proud of the yoke, like its fathers.

In presence of the king, and beneath his majestic aspect, no one dared to infringe the order he had prescribed; but even in his own palace, his children, with their favorites and companions, indulged in disorders which were easily hidden from the now dimming sight of the august old man; religion and morality became objects of ridicule; their authority was deemed nugatory, since they daily lent themselves to serve the caprices of the sovereign, who persuaded himself that he observed their laws, and desired that others also should strictly conform. A certain indifference for principles began to prevail; men ventured to doubt opinions once unquestioned; a habit of jesting with everything, and unblushing cynicism, did all but appear beneath the royal eyes, and afflict the declining years of the aged Louis. Even in the men who appeared most scrupulously attached to the traditions of his best days, a change of feeling was apparent. Massillon, for instance, preached in a very different tone from Bossuet; he indeed exhorted the people to obedience, but at the same time reminded the king that it was necessary to merit it by respecting their rights.

The spirit and principles of the court had undergone this change before the literature took any other direction than that which had been impressed upon it by the illustrious authors who had one by one disappeared.

Meanwhile, beyond the bounds of France were several writers who had a mind of their own. These were the Protestants, exiled by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They avenged themselves for the persecution to which they had been subjected, by inveighing against the monarch and

the Roman Catholic religion. Their works found their way into France, and found spirits inclined to discontent, and ready to imbibe from them a contempt for the authority of the government.

Among these refugees was a man whose works must live, though the obscure libels of the rest are almost forgotten. We allude to BAYLE, the coolest and boldest of doubters, the Montaigne of the seventeenth century. He had been educated in Protestantism, which the Jesuits forced him to abjure in his youth, but to which he speedily returned. In 1675 he obtained a professorship of philosophy at Sédan, and occupied it with distinction till the suppression of the universities in 1681, when he received a similar appointment at Rotterdam. In the same year he published his *Pensées sur la Comète*, in which he attacked the vulgar prejudice which regarded this meteor as a certain presage of evil. Such was his first step. In 1684 he began the literary journal known under the title of *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*; and, from the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, wrote boldly against the intolerance of Louis XIV. In his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, he exhumed the most paradoxical opinions, and adduced new arguments in support of them, but without avowing them as his own. "Circumspect towards power," says Villemain, "but with the utmost temerity against dogmas; cool about political independence, but resolved upon philosophic liberty—Bayle affords the first announcement and characteristic of the earliest school of the eighteenth century. At once a compiler and dialectician, the most thoughtful of erudite men, and the retailer of anecdotes of a world-wide history, his book—a vast magazine of knowledge and incredulity—was calculated to supersede the necessity of study to a lively and thoughtless age." But the innovations of Bayle, sheltered as he was in a foreign and hostile country, do not seem to have

had any very immediate or powerful influence on the mind of France. He has been called the Montaigne of the seventeenth century, because he employs scepticism to destroy existing opinions, but without substituting any of his own. In the mind of Bayle, doubt is the end, not the means; he maintains a perfect balance of opinions, which nothing has power to swerve either to this side or that. Uncertainty seems to be his delight, his spirit being in no way depressed by ignorance on questions of the most vital importance to man. But his is learned and philosophic scepticism, and he ridicules those who lightly reject without examination, still more than those who believe with docile credulity. The pleasantry of Bayle is generally coarse and vulgar, though mingled with the pedantry of the critic; and this might have gone far to diminish the influence of his works, had there not since arisen at various times men who have equipped themselves in his armory, adding elegance to his pleasantries, polishing them for the frivolous, and thus procuring for them a universal currency.

About the same time appeared, in the person of JEAN BAPTISTE ROUSSEAU, what had been wanting in the literary glory of Louis XIV.—a lyric poet. Malherbe had found no successor as Corneille had done. The sphere of lyric poetry, indeed, presents singular difficulties from the structure of the French language, and these have been rendered greater by the passion for imitating the ancients. “If lyric poetry,” says Barante, “had not received foreign and antique importations—if she had remained the daughter of our old fabliaux, of our chivalrous romances, of our mediæval mysteries, of our Gothic superstitions—she might perhaps have vegetated long in infancy; but she would have retained a true and national character, an intimate connexion with our manners, our religion, and the annals of our country. It has not been so. About

the sixteenth century, our authors, instead of perfecting the Gallic literature, took upon them to be the heirs of Greece and Rome. They adopted gods which we never worshipped, and customs which we never practised, repudiating all the recollections of France to transport themselves into those of antiquity. They began to copy or to travesty the ancient models, and repel the impressions and inspirations of daily life. Poetry, once the charm of palace and chateau—poetry, which our kings and chevaliers, illiterate as they were, traced with the points of their swords, to express their loves and their griefs—became the exclusive patrimony of pedants who were versed in Horace and Pindar, but who knew nothing of nature.”

It was especially in lyric poetry, which ought to be the expression of the author's own thoughts and feelings, that this vice was most sensibly manifest. The man who will travel to Rome or to Greece to describe what he feels, may have some enthusiasm himself, but it will rarely affect his readers. Hence the fine odes of Rousseau, though confessedly displaying considerable energy, and a kind of pompous harmony which no other has imparted to the language, yet fails to excite the sympathy. It pleases the ear, perhaps commends itself to the fancy, but fails to reach the heart. We remark, too, the spirit which we have described as hanging about the last years of Louis XIV. ; the free comminglement of licentious morals, with a taste for religious sublimities. Rousseau translated the Psalms, as well as composed epigrams on the clergy, and odes of a sufficiently profane character.\*

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\* He was born at Paris in 1670. His father was a shoemaker. The boy was indebted to the Jesuits for his education. After his first dramatic success, he refused to recognise his father. Lamotte, also of humble origin, wrote him the following lines :

“ On ne se choisit point son père.  
Par un reproche populaire



The ABBE CHAULIEU (1639-1720) devoted his verse to the service of voluptuous pleasure, and earned the appellation of the Anacreon of the Temple; but he did not, like Rousseau, prostitute poetry in strains of low debauchery. His *Louanges de la vie Champêtre* is considered the earliest good specimen of pastoral poetry in the language. Voltaire calls him "*Le premier des poètes negligés.*"

The tragedians followed closely in the footsteps of Racine with more or less success. Comedy continued with some vigor to represent the corrupt manners of the age; and LE SAGE, the rival of Regnard and Dancourt, applied the same talent to romance, which thus assumed a new character in his hands. He was a student of Spanish literature, and was imbued with its spirit. He was renowned for his humorous and witty plays and novels. He is best known by his *Gil Blas*, *Diable Boi-*

Le sage n'est point abattu;  
Où, quoique le vulgaire pense,  
Rousseau, la plus vile naissance  
Donne du lustre à la vertu."

He was banished from France on account of certain verses, which were attributed to him. He attached himself to M. de Luc, French ambassador in Switzerland. He afterwards received permission to return to his native land. He went to Paris, however, only once, and then in disguise. He died at Brussels in 1741. Piron wrote the following famous Epitaph upon him:

"Ci-gît l'illustre et malheureux Rousseau;  
La Brabante fut sa tombe et Paris son berceau.  
Voici l'abrégé de sa vie,  
Qui fut trop longue de moitié:  
Il fut trente ans digne d'envie,  
Et trente ans digne de pitié."

Voltaire and he were bitter enemies. Their hostility was occasioned by criticisms, which each made upon the other. Voltaire visited Rousseau, and read a poem, in which the latter found great impiety. Rousseau then read his *Ode à la Postérité*. "Voilà," said Voltaire, "une lettre, qui n'arrivera jamais à son adresse." This, their first interview, was their last.

*teurs*, and *Bachelier de Salamanca*, which have been translated into almost every European language. *Gil Blas* is a picture of the human heart under the aspect at once of the vicious and the ridiculous. Le Sage, like Molière, appreciated human folly without analyzing it, and is one of the last authors who delineated character, instead of defining it.

The ABBE PREVOST (1697–1763) was also a prolific writer of romances. *Manon Lescaut* is his most noted work.

FONTENELLE (1657–1757), a nephew of the great Corneille, is not only regarded as the great link between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, having been born early enough to witness the splendors of the best days of Louis XIV., and lived long enough to see the greatest men of the eighteenth century; but he is considered to have coquetted with both, and, as it has been expressed, to have used one-half of his understanding to hide the other. He made his début in tragedy, in which, however, he found no encouragement. An ardent zeal for the honor of his uncle, as well as some feelings of personal pique, induced him to set himself against the reigning tastes in literature, and in common with La Motte and Perrault, he vigorously disputed the authority of classic antiquity. The gentleness and indolence of his disposition, however, prevented him from embracing any opinion with great warmth: he attached to his views neither so much certainty nor so much importance as to induce others to adopt them. He had early imbibed the Cartesian philosophy, and retained his regard for it, but without either zealously defending it, or attacking the new school, which was gaining ground. This indolence appears in his works, which are remarkable rather for delicacy and impartiality, than for striking originality. His *Lettres Galantes* display frivolous wit, and little else; but the man of science appears in his *Dialogues des*

*Morts*, and his *Pluralité des Mondes*. And there is much appreciation of virtue as well as of science, though half hidden under the coldness and precision of the language, in his *Histoire des Oracles* and his *Eloges des Académiciens*.

LA MOTTE (1672–1731) bore some resemblance to Fontenelle, both in his character and opinions. Cold and factitious in his lyrics, sometimes graceful in the Anacreontic ode, a fabulist without simplicity, though with some ingenuity, he was happier in the dramatic career, but more distinguished in criticism than in any other sphere of authorship. He defended with subtlety the cause which Perrault had maintained without either wit or learning against the poetical creed of Racine and Boileau. Together they raised the standard of revolt against the worship of antiquity, and would have dethroned poetry itself on the ground of its inutility. Thus scepticism commenced by established literary doctrines becoming matters of doubt and controversy. Before attacking more serious creeds, it fastened on literary ones—a kind of skirmish before serious action.

Such is the picture presented by the earlier part of the eighteenth century. Part of the generation had remained attached to the traditions of the great age; others opened the path into which the whole country was about to throw itself. The faith of the nation in its political institutions, its religion, and its literary creed, was shaken to its foundation, the positive and the palpable began to engross every interest hitherto occupied with the ideal; and this disposition, so favorable to the cultivation of science, brought with it a universal spirit of criticism. The habit of reflecting was generally diffused; people were not afraid to exercise their own judgment; every man had begun to form a higher estimate of himself and of his own opinion, and to care less for those hitherto received as of undoubted authority. Still, literature had not taken any

very positive direction : there had not appeared men of sufficiently powerful genius to give it a decisive impulse.

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## XX.—OPEN ATTACK ON RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT.

MONTESQUIEU'S LETTRES PERSANES—ESPRIT DES LOIS—DIALOGUE BETWEEN SYLLA AND EUCRATES—VOLTAIRE—CHARACTER OF HIS GENIUS—HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

THE first powerful attack on the manners, institutions, and establishments of France, and indeed of Europe in general, is that conveyed in the *Lettres Persanes* of the BARON DE MONTESQUIEU, a work on the same plan as Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*. Under the transparent veil of pleasantries aimed at the Moslem religion, and even by more direct attacks, Montesquieu sought to consign to ridicule the mode of theological reasoning in general, and the belief in every species of dogma. Notwithstanding the immense success which attended this effort of his youth, Montesquieu did not follow up this course, but abandoned light literature, to devote himself to the serious study of the philosophy of those laws with which he was already, as a magistrate, well acquainted. He withdrew also from the parliament (Court of Justice) of Bordeaux, of which he was president; travelled through Italy, Switzerland, Holland, and afterwards accompanied Lord Chesterfield to England. On his return to the continent, he published his *Considérations sur les Causes de la Grandeur et de la Décadence des Romains*, which is said to be written as with the pen of Tacitus. Fourteen years afterwards appeared his *Esprit des Lois*, an extraordinary specimen of argument, erudition, and terseness of style. The work commences with this broad definition :—



Les lois, dans leur signification la plus étendue, ont les rapports nécessaires qui dérivent de la nature des choses, et dans ce sens tous les êtres ont leurs lois ; La Divinité a ses lois, les intelligences supérieures à l'homme ont leurs lois, les bêtes ont leurs lois, l'homme a ses lois.

He then inquires into the facts which give birth to the different systems of legislation, and reasons from the circumstances of the case on the kind of legislation most suitable. It will not be denied that he places the mind too much under the dominion of matter, and argues for necessity rather than liberty, thus depriving moral obligation of much of its absolute character ; yet the book is, on the whole, inspired with a spirit of justice and humanity. Montesquieu incited no one to rebel against any constituted authority : he taught respect for the laws more than love of liberty ; and however he hated despotism, he hinted not that it should be violently overthrown. Here is an imaginary dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates. It may be doubted whether it is a true representation of the Sylla of history ; but it is as interesting a fragment as we can easily detach from the works of this author :—

Quelques jours après que Sylla se fut démis de la dictature, j'appris que la réputation que j'avais parmi les philosophes lui faisait souhaiter de me voir. Il était à sa maison de Tibur, où il jouissait des premiers moments tranquilles de sa vie. Je ne sentis point devant lui le désordre où nous jette ordinairement la présence des grands hommes, et, dès que nous fûmes seuls : Sylla, lui dis-je, vous vous êtes donc mis vous-même dans cet état de médiocrité qui afflige presque tous les humains ; vous avez renoncé à cet empire naturel que votre gloire et vos vertus vous donnaient sur tous les hommes ! la fortune semble être gênée de ne plus vous élever aux honneurs.

Eucrate, me dit-il, si je ne suis plus en spectacle à l'univers, c'est la faute des choses humaines, qui ont des bornes, et non pas la mienne. J'ai cru avoir rempli ma destinée, dès que je n'ai plus eu à faire de grandes choses. Je n'étais point fait pour gouverner tranquillement un peuple esclave. J'aime à remporter des victoires, à fonder ou

détruire des états, à faire des ligues, à punir un usurpateur ; mais pour ces minces détails de gouvernement où les génies médiocres ont tant d'avantages, cette lente exécution des lois, cette discipline d'une milice tranquille, mon âme ne saurait s'en occuper.

Il est singulier, lui dis-je, que vous ayez porté tant de délicatesse dans l'ambition ; nous avons bien vu de grands hommes peu touchés du vain éclat et de la pompe qui entourent ceux qui gouvernent : mais il y en a bien peu qui n'aient été sensibles au plaisir de gouverner, et de faire rendre à leurs fantaisies le respect qui n'est dû qu'aux lois.

Et moi, me dit-il, Eucrate, je n'ai jamais été si peu content que lorsque je me suis vu maître absolu dans Rome, que j'ai regardé autour de moi, et que je n'ai trouvé ni rivaux ni ennemis.

J'ai cru qu'on dirait quelque jour que je n'avais châtié que des esclaves. Veux-tu, me suis-je dit, que dans ta patrie il n'y ait plus d'hommes qui puissent être touchés de ta gloire ? et, puisque tu établis la tyrannie, ne vois-tu pas bien qu'il n'y aura point après toi de prince que la flatterie ne t'égale et ne pare de ton nom, de tes titres, et de tes vertus même ?

Seigneur, vous changez toutes mes idées. De la façon dont je vous voyais agir, je croyais que vous aviez de l'ambition, mais aucun amour pour la gloire : je voyais bien que votre âme était haute ; mais je ne soupçonnais pas qu'elle fût grande : tout, dans votre vie, semblait me montrer un homme dévoré du désir de commander, et qui, plein de funestes passions, se chargeait avec plaisir de la honte, des remords, et de la bassesse même, attachés à la tyrannie. Car enfin, vous avez tout sacrifié à votre puissance ; vous vous êtes rendu redoutable à tous les Romains ; vous avez exercé sans pitié les fonctions de la plus terrible magistrature qui fut jamais. Le sénat ne vit qu'en tremblant un défenseur si impitoyable. Quelqu'un vous dit : Sylla, jusqu'à quand répandras-tu le sang romain ? veux-tu ne commander qu'à des murailles ? Pour lors vous publiâtes ces tables qui décidèrent de la vie et de la mort de chaque citoyen.

Et c'est tout le sang que j'ai versé qui m'a mis en état de faire la plus grande de toutes mes actions. Si j'avais gouverné les Romains avec douceur, quelle merveille que l'ennui, que le dégoût, qu'un caprice, m'eussent fait quitter le gouvernement ? Mais je me suis démis de la dictature dans le temps qu'il n'y avait pas un seul homme dans l'univers qui ne crût que la dictature était mon seul asile ; j'ai

paru devant les Romains, citoyen au milieu de mes concitoyens, et j'ai osé leur dire : Je suis prêt à rendre compte de tout le sang que j'ai versé pour la république ; je répondrai à tous ceux qui viendront me demander leur père, leur fils ou leur frère. Tous les Romains se sont tus devant moi.

Cette belle action dont vous me parlez me paraît bien imprudente. Il est vrai que vous avez eu pour vous le nouvel étonnement dans lequel vous avez mis les Romains. Mais comment osâtes-vous leur parler de vous justifier, et prendre pour juges des gens qui vous devaient tant de vengeances ?

Quand toutes vos actions n'auraient été que sévères pendant que vous étiez le maître, elles devenaient des crimes affreux dès que vous ne l'étiez plus.

Vous appelez des crimes, me dit-il, ce qui a fait le salut de la république. Vouliez-vous que je visse tranquillement des sénateurs trahir le sénat pour ce peuple qui, s'imaginant que la liberté doit être aussi extrême que le peut être l'esclavage, cherchait à abolir la magistrature même ?

Le peuple, gêné par les lois et par la gravité du sénat, a toujours travaillé à renverser l'un et l'autre. Mais celui qui est assez ambitieux pour le servir contre le sénat et les lois, le fut toujours assez pour devenir son maître. C'est ainsi que nous avons vu finir tant de républiques dans la Grèce et dans l'Italie.

Pour prévenir un pareil malheur, le sénat a toujours été obligé d'occuper à la guerre ce peuple indocile. Il a été forcé, malgré lui, à ravager la terre et à soumettre tant de nations dont l'obéissance nous pèse. A présent que l'univers n'a plus d'ennemis à nous donner, quel serait le destin de la république ? et sans moi, le sénat aurait-il pu empêcher que le peuple, dans sa fureur aveugle pour la liberté, ne se livrât lui-même à Marius, ou au premier tyran qui lui aurait fait espérer l'indépendance ?

Les dieux, qui ont donné à la plupart des hommes une lâche ambition, ont attaché à la liberté presque autant de malheurs qu'à la servitude ; mais quel que doive être le prix de cette noble liberté, il faut bien le payer aux dieux.

La mer engloutit les vaisseaux, elle submerge des pays entiers, et elle est pourtant utile aux humains.

La postérité jugera ce que Rome n'a pas encore osé examiner ; elle

trouvera peut-être que je n'ai pas assez versé de sang et que tous les partisans de Marius n'ont pas été proscrits.

Il faut que je l'avoue, Sylla, vous m'étonnez. Quoi ! c'est pour le bien de votre patrie que vous avez versé tant de sang ! et vous avez eu de l'attachement pour elle !

Eucrate, me dit-il, je n'eus jamais cet amour dominant pour la patrie dont nous trouvons tant d'exemples dans les premiers temps de la république, et j'aime autant Coriolan, qui porte la flamme et le fer jusqu'aux murailles de sa ville ingrate, qui fait repentir chaque citoyen de l'affront que lui a fait chaque citoyen, que celui qui chassa les Gaulois du Capitole. Je ne me suis jamais piqué d'être l'esclave ni l'idolâtre de la société de mes pareils : et cet amour tant vanté est une passion trop populaire pour être compatible avec la hauteur de mon âme. Je me suis uniquement conduit par mes réflexions, et surtout par le mépris que j'ai eu pour les hommes. On peut juger, par la manière dont j'ai traité le seul grand peuple de l'univers, de l'excès de ce mépris pour tous les autres.

J'ai cru qu'étant sur la terre il fallait que j'y fusse libre. Si j'étais né chez les barbares, j'aurais moins cherché à usurper le trône pour commander que pour ne pas obéir. Né dans une république, j'ai obtenu la gloire des conquérants en ne cherchant que celle des hommes libres.

Lorsque avec mes soldats je suis entré dans Rome, je ne respirais ni la fureur ni la vengeance. J'ai jugé sans haine, mais aussi sans pitié, les Romains étonnés. Vous étiez libres, ai-je dit, et vous voulez vivre esclaves ! non, mais mourez, et vous aurez l'avantage de mourir citoyens d'une ville libre.

J'ai cru qu'ôter la liberté dans une ville dont j'étais citoyen était le plus grand crime. J'ai puni ce crime-là ; et je ne me suis point embarrassé si je serais le bon ou le mauvais génie de la république. Cependant le gouvernement de nos pères a été rétabli ; le peuple a expié tous les affronts qu'il avait faits aux nobles : la crainte a suspendu les jalousies ; et Rome n'a jamais été si tranquille.

Vous voilà instruit de ce qui m'a déterminé à toutes les sanglantes tragédies que vous avez vues. Si j'avais vécu dans ces jours heureux de la république où les citoyens, tranquilles dans leurs maisons, y rendaient aux dieux une âme libre, vous m'auriez vu passer ma vie dans cette retraite, que je n'ai obtenue que par tant de sang et de sueur.



Seigneur, lui dis-je, il est heureux que le ciel ait épargné au genre humain le nombre des hommes tels que vous. Nés pour la médiocrité, nous sommes accablés par les esprits sublimes ; pour qu'un homme soit au-dessus de l'humanité, il en coûte trop cher à tous les autres.

Vous avez regardé l'ambition des héros comme une passion commune, et vous n'avez fait cas que de l'ambition qui raisonne ; le désir insatiable de dominer, que vous avez trouvé dans le cœur de quelques citoyens, vous a fait prendre la résolution d'être un homme extraordinaire : l'amour de votre liberté vous a fait prendre celle d'être terrible et cruel. Qui dirait qu'un héroïsme de principe eût été plus funeste qu'un héroïsme d'impétuosité ? Mais si, pour vous empêcher d'être esclave, il vous a fallu usurper la dictature, comment avez-vous osé la rendre ? Le peuple romain, dites-vous, vous a vu désarmé, et n'a point attenté sur votre vie. C'est un danger auquel vous avez échappé, un plus grand danger peut vous attendre. Il peut vous arriver de voir quelque jour un grand criminel jouir de votre modération, et vous confondre dans la foule d'un peuple soumis.

J'ai un nom, me dit-il, et il me suffit pour ma sûreté et celle du peuple romain. Ce nom arrête toutes les entreprises ; et il n'y a point d'ambition qui n'en soit épouvantée. Sylla respire, et son génie est plus puissant que celui de tous les Romains. Sylla a autour de lui Chéronée, Orchomène et Signion. Sylla a donné à chaque famille de Rome un exemple domestique et terrible : chaque Romain m'aura toujours devant les yeux ; et, dans ses songes mêmes, je lui apparaître couvert de sang ; il croira voir les funestes tables et lire son nom à la tête des proscrits. On murmure en secret contre mes lois ; mais elles ne seront pas effacées par des flots même de sang romain. Ne suis-je pas au milieu de Rome ? Vous trouverez encore chez moi le javelot que j'avais à Orchomène, et le bouclier que je portai sur les murailles d'Athènes. Parce que je n'ai point de lieutenants, en suis-je moins Sylla ? j'ai pour moi le sénat avec la justice et les lois ; le sénat a pour lui mon génie, ma fortune et ma gloire.

J'avoue, lui dis-je, que, quand on a une fois fait trembler quelqu'un, on conserve presque toujours quelque chose de l'avantage qu'on a pris.

Sans doute, me dit-il. J'ai étonné les hommes, et c'est beaucoup. Repassez dans votre mémoire l'histoire de ma vie : vous verrez que j'ai tout tiré de ce principe, et qu'il a été l'âme de toutes mes actions.

Ressouvenez-vous de mes démêlés avec Marius : je fus indigné de voir un homme sans nom, fier de la bassesse de sa naissance, entreprendre de ramener les premières familles de Rome dans la foule du peuple ; et dans cette situation, je portais tout le poids d'une grande âme. J'étais jeune, et je me résolus de me mettre en état de demander compte à Marius de ses mépris. Pour cela je l'attaquai avec ses propres armes, c'est-à-dire par des victoires contre les ennemis de la république.

Lorsque, par le caprice du sort, je fus obligé de sortir de Rome, je me conduisis de même : j'allai faire la guerre à Mithridate ; et je crus détruire Marius à force de vaincre l'ennemi de Marius. Pendant que je laissais ce Romain jouir de son pouvoir sur la populace, je multipliais ses mortifications ; et je le forçais tous les jours d'aller au Capitole rendre grâces aux dieux des succès dont je le désespérais. Je lui faisais une guerre de réputation, plus cruelle cent fois que celle que mes légions faisaient au roi barbare ; il ne sortait pas un seul mot de ma bouche qui ne marquât mon audace ; et mes moindres actions, toujours superbes, étaient pour Marius de funestes présages. Enfin Mithridate demanda la paix : les conditions étaient raisonnables ; et si Rome eût été tranquille, ou si ma fortune n'avait pas été chancelante, je les aurais acceptées. Mais le mauvais état de mes affaires m'obligea de les rendre plus dures ; j'exigeai qu'il détruisît sa flotte, et qu'il rendît aux rois ses voisins tous les états dont il les avait dépouillés. Je te laisse, lui dis-je, le royaume de tes pères, à toi qui devrais me remercier de ce que je te laisse la main avec laquelle tu as signé l'ordre de faire mourir en un jour cent mille Romains. Mithridate resta immobile ; et Marius, au milieu de Rome, en trembla.

Cette même audace qui m'a si bien servi contre Mithridate, contre Marius, contre son fils, contre Thélésinus, contre le peuple, qui a soutenu toute ma dictature, a aussi défendu ma vie le jour que je l'ai quittée, et ce jour assure ma liberté pour jamais.

Seigneur, lui dis-je, Marius raisonnait comme vous, lorsque, convert du sang de ses ennemis et de celui des Romains, il montrait cette audace que vous avez punie. Vous avez bien pour vous quelques victoires de plus et de plus grands excès. Mais, en prenant la dictature, vous avez donné l'exemple du crime que vous avez puni. Voilà l'exemple qui sera suivi, et non pas celui d'une modération qu'on ne fera qu'admirer.

Quand les dieux ont souffert que Sylla se soit impunément fait dictateur dans Rome, ils y ont proscrit la liberté pour jamais. Il faudrait qu'ils fissent trop de miracles pour arracher à présent du cœur de tous les capitaines romains l'ambition de régner. Vous leur avez appris qu'il y avait une voie bien plus sûre pour aller à la tyrannie et la garder sans péril. Vous avez divulgué ce fatal secret, et ôté ce qui fait seul les bons citoyens d'une république trop riche et trop grande, le désespoir de pouvoir l'opprimer.

Il changea de visage, et se tut un moment. Je ne crains, me dit-il avec émotion, qu'un homme dans lequel je crois voir plusieurs Marius. Le hasard, ou bien un destin plus fort, me l'a fait épargner. Je le regarde sans cesse, j'étudie son âme : il y cache des desseins profonds. Mais, s'il ose jamais former celui de commander à des hommes que j'ai faits mes égaux, je jure par les dieux que je punirai son insolence.

The maturity of the eighteenth century is found in VOLTAIRE. He was the personification of its temerity, its spirit of derision, its zeal, its ardor, and its universality. Nor only of his own age. He embodied in himself whatever is most inborn and characteristic in the whole French nation. The Gallic spirit, which the trouvères faithfully transmitted to the authors of the *Romance of the Rose*, and which reappeared in Villon, in Comines, in Montaigne; the spirit of freezing and biting irony; the spirit of analysis and annihilation; that spirit at once positive and passionate, fond of the palpable, averse to the marvellous; that spirit which, even in the excesses to which it is driven by passion, preserves an instinctive sense of the just medium, and finds its way back again; that spirit, in short, which, by its versatility, is ready by turns and equally for custom and for novelty, found in Voltaire its most brilliant form and its most perfect type. In him nature had, so to speak, identified the individual with the nation, bestowing on him a character in the highest degree elastic, having no depth of passion, but abundance of lively sensibility; little system either of principle or conduct, but that promptitude of self-



direction which supplies its place; a quickness of perception amounting almost to intuition, which, to a certain extent, justifies presumption; and an almost unexampled degree of activity, by which he was in some sort many men at once. No writer, even in the eighteenth century, knew so many things, or treated so many subjects. That which is the ruin of many minds, was the strength of his. He was the Briareus of literature, with his hundred arms, stretching in every direction. True, he wanted some of the intellectual endowments necessary to universality of genius; a few of them, and these highly important. In every great man, some shades of character are wanting, or are false: in Voltaire, the deficiency was that of the graver tones.

Rich in diversified talent, and in the gifts of fortune, he proceeded to the conquest of his age with the combined power of the highest endowments, under the most favorable circumstances.

The events of his life include little that is interesting, except as we see in them the progress of this victory. Voltaire, hunted again and again as a moral pest from the capital of France by the powers that would fain have preserved the people from his opinions; yet ever gaining ground; finding his wit always welcome, and his opinions gradually prevailing; one audacious sentiment after another broached and branded with infamy, yet secretly entertained; till the struggle was at length given up, and the nation, as with one voice, avowed itself to be à la Voltaire.

This singular genius was the youngest son of Francis Arouet, notary of the Châtelet, and afterwards treasurer of the Chamber of Accounts, and was born at Châtenay, on the 20th of February, 1694. He was so weakly that he received the hasty and informal private baptism which is permitted in extreme cases, and not till ten months afterwards was he presented in the church for the more regular administration of the rite.



It was with reference to this that his godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf, said to the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos : "He had a double baptism ; but it does not appear upon him, for he repeats the *Mosaïde* by heart, though only three years of age." This was an impious poem, attributed to J. B. Rousseau, so that it has been said Voltaire showed symptoms of infidelity from infancy. The lady desired to hear him, and was so much pleased with his display of precocious talent, that by her will she left him 2000 livres, with which to purchase a library. The boy received his earliest education in the Jesuit's College of Louis XIV., under Parée and Le Jay ; and here, amid the common routine of study and amusement, he gave way to sallies of wit, and mirth, and profanity, which astonished his companions and terrified his preceptors. Father Jay even then predicted with sorrow that he would raise the standard of deism in France.

His father, desiring him to follow the legal profession, sent him to study law ; but he turned from it in disgust, and devoted himself to literature. The Abbé de Châteauneuf, who seems to have been his earliest master in infidelity, now introduced him to a coterie of men distinguished for rank and talent, but claiming exemption from creeds and prejudices, with liberty to deride in secret all that they were obliged to appear to respect in the religion, the government, and the good morals, upheld, in theory at least, by Louis XIV. They were such as the Prince of Conti, the Duke and the Grand Prior of Vendôme, the Marquis de la Fare, the Abbé de Chaulieu, with the Abbé de Châteauneuf himself, men destined by their birth to be the pillars of church and state, but secretly inclined to pour contempt upon both. Here the young Voltaire acquired that taste for aristocratic society, and ease in mingling with persons of rank, which formed a distinguishing trait in his character and manners. His father was grieved with his mode of life ; and with a view to withdraw him from it, induced the

Marquis of Châteauneuf, the French ambassador at the Hague, to take him with him as a page. But here he fell in love with the daughter of Madame du Noyer, a Protestant refugee, who made such a noise about the affair, that the poet was forced to return home. The poor father was broken-hearted between the poetry and profligacy of his youngest son, and the obstinate Jansenism of the eldest. He declared he had as sons two madmen—one in prose, the other in verse; and he positively refused to forgive the latter, but on condition of his resuming the study of jurisprudence. He was, however, released from this by the kind interference of M. Caumartin, a friend of the family, who invited him to spend some time at his château of St. Ange, promising the father that he should not return to Paris till he had chosen a profession. It was not to be so, however. In this château lived M. Caumartin's father, an old man, who had known the court of Henry IV., as well as the earlier days of Louis XIV., and whose recollections furnished Voltaire with the materials of two of his most celebrated works. Louis XIV. was dying, and his hoary head was heaped with coarse and cowardly satires, instead of the eulogiums which had flattered his earlier years. One of these, which concluded with "J'ai vu ces maux, et je n'ai pas vingt ans," was easily attributed, but unjustly, to the young Arouet, and he was thrown into the Bastille, where he projected the *Henriade*, and finished the tragedy of *Œdipe*. The regent receiving proofs of his innocence in the matter of the satire, about a year afterwards released him, allowed him to be presented at court, and promised, that if he would be good, he would take care of him.

"I thank your royal highness," said the poet, "for your design of providing for my maintenance; but I beg you will not again undertake the care of my lodging." It was at this time he assumed the name of Voltaire, saying that he hoped it would prove more auspicious than that of Arouet had been. The tragedy of *Œdipe* was played in 1718, and proved so suc-

cessful, that even M. Arouet was conquered; he embraced his son with tears of joy, and gave him leave to follow the bent of his genius. Another love affair, and another disgrace on political suspicions, diversified his career as a dramatist; but now he was to appear as an epic poet. He had resolved on publishing the *Henriade*, a heroic poem on the reign of Henry IV.; but first he would submit it, canto by canto, to the judgment of some literary friends. On one occasion he lost patience under their criticisms, and threw his work into the fire. The president, Hénault, rescued it with difficulty, and at a future time reminded him of this service. "Remember," said he, "it was I that saved the *Henriade*, and it cost me a handsome pair of lace ruffles." Meanwhile, an imperfect edition of the work had been circulated surreptitiously in London, under the title of *The League*, and awakened against the author the zeal of the clergy, who averred its principles were semipelagian, and of the courtiers, who maintained they were seditious. He was refused license to print it; and the young king declined accepting the dedication. Nevertheless, the reputation of the author spread and prevailed. He continued to frequent the company of the great; but a cruel incident now occurred, which taught him that their society had its dangers to balance against its fascinations. Dining one day with the Duke of Sully, he said something which offended the Chevalier de Rohan, a haughty young nobleman, who, a few days afterwards, had him soundly flogged by his servant, while he stood by. Voltaire, burning with rage, begged, but in vain, that the duke would assist him to avenge the outrage; then determining to take his cause into his own hands, he secluded himself to learn fencing and English; the one to fight his adversary, the other to live out of France if the result of the combat should render it necessary. When he deemed himself expert enough to measure swords with De Rohan, he sent him a scornful challenge, which was accepted for the following

day; but the relatives, meanwhile, procured an order for his imprisonment. A second time, therefore, he was lodged in the Bastille, where he remained six months, and then obtained his release, only on condition of quitting the kingdom. He passed over into England, where he published the *Henriade* by subscription, and obtained leave to dedicate it to George I. At the same time he became acquainted with Bolingbroke and others, the most distinguished men of the time, and learned to use argument as well as ridicule in his war with religion. Hitherto, say his biographers, his hatred to its mysteries and its dogmas had inspired only bon-mots; but in the school of English philosophy, he fortified himself with the facts and arguments which he afterwards used, without, however, renouncing the raillery which was best suited to his own genius, and most likely to find acceptance with his giddy countrymen. Here, also, he gathered from a man who had passed many years with Charles XII. of Sweden, most of the materials of which he afterwards composed the history of that adventurous monarch; here, also, he sketched those *Lettres Philosophiques* which drew down upon him more persecution than anything else he had written.

Meanwhile, the lapse of three years had somewhat abated his wrath, and his own inclination seconded the invitation of his friends for his return to Paris. He lived for some time in a retired and obscure faubourg, occupying himself by turns with literary labors and financial speculations. He realized a considerable sum in a lottery, imported corn from Barbary, lent money to needy noblemen; and afterwards coming into the possession of the paternal estate, found himself the possessor of considerable wealth, of which he was always ready to employ a part in works of charity, and especially in aiding youthful literary talent.

The comedian Lecouvreur having died and been refused the rites of sepulture, the poet composed some verses of so



bold a character, that he was in danger of another lodgment in the Bastille; and to avoid it, feigned a second flight to England, while in truth he only retired to Rouen. Here he assumed the name of an English nobleman, and with the utmost secrecy effected the printing of his *Histoire de Charles XII.*, which had been forbidden, and his *Lettres Philosophiques*, which he durst not even have asked leave to publish. Again, when the storm was over, he returned to Paris, but again was obliged to fly. The *Lettres* which he had got printed, but withheld from publication, were circulated through the treachery of a bookseller, who was imprisoned; but the author not being forthcoming, the only further vengeance was that of burning the work by the hands of the hangman. This time his flight was not solitary. He had formed a liaison with the Marchioness du Châtelet—a strange compound of savante and mere woman. She studied geometry and metaphysics, translated Newton, and analyzed Leibnitz; while she passionately loved dress, play, theatricals, and other more sensual pleasures. She retired with Voltaire from the frivolous circles, in which they had lost much time; the gaming-tables, where they had lost much money; and the suppers, where they had contracted many a fit of indigestion; and the two took up their abode at Cirey, on the confines of Champagne and Lorraine. Here they shared and partly exchanged intellectual pursuits. The lady, despite her taste for geometry, learned to love poetry; and the poet, the better to understand and admire *la sublime Emilie*, entered with ardor on the study of the sciences, and wrote the *Elémens de la Philosophie de Newton*. Madame du Châtelet, more prudent than he, and less under the power of imagination, watched over him with assiduity, strove to save him from others and from himself, to keep him out of scandalous quarrels, and dissuade him from compromising himself by improper productions. Their intercourse, however, was not without occasional storms, nor was

the poet's residence at Cirey by any means constant. Sometimes business called him to Paris ; sometimes fear drove him abroad. Now the publication of a scandalous work forced him to repair to Holland ; now he escapes to Brussels ; and in 1740, we find him assisting Frederic the Great to prepare a refutation of Macchiavelli. Now he becomes a favorite at court ; is appointed historiographer of France, a gentleman of the bed-chamber, and a member of the French Academy ; but now Crébillon, his rival, is patronized ; he finds himself in bad savor, and retires with Madame du Châtelet to Luneville, in the neighborhood of King Stanislaus. Then he loses his mistress by death under singularly painful circumstances ; returns to Paris, and soon after accepts an invitation to reside at the court of Prussia. Here he was presented with the Order of Merit, the key of the chamberlain, and a pension of 20,000 livres. He had apartments under those of the king, whom he was permitted to visit at stated hours to read with him, and assist in those literary occupations in which his majesty was wont to find recreation from the cares of government. But now he embroiled himself with Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, and wrote a satire upon him, which the king ordered to be burned in presence of the writer. The royal *littérateur* himself did not escape the pitiless raillery of the poet, and a deadly quarrel was the consequence, on which he left Berlin. He would fain have taken up his residence at Paris, but his *Pucelle d'Orléans* had excited so much displeasure, that he was not allowed to remain in the capital. After residing some years at Colmar, he purchased a country-house in the neighborhood of Geneva ; but presently taking part in its political contentions, he found himself involved in disputes with many of the principal people of the place, and thought it prudent to leave it. He therefore purchased the estate of Ferney, in France, about three miles from the Lake of Geneva, where he resided during the rest of his days with

his niece, Madame Denis. He induced manufacturers and others to settle around him, obtained for them important advantages, erected a church for them—made, in short, a pretty town of a wretched hamlet—and reigned like a petty prince among his subjects. From this retreat he poured out an exhaustless variety of works, which were extensively circulated and eagerly perused. They generally breathed a spirit of hostility to everything which contravened his ideas of freedom and independence; but his war with ecclesiastical tyranny often degenerated into attacks on revealed religion itself and the morality it inculcates. Despite his faults, he was the admiration of all the wits and philosophers of Europe, and numbered among his correspondents and pupils some of the greatest sovereigns of the age. The king of Prussia renewed his intercourse with him, and Catherine II. of Russia sent him valuable presents. Meanwhile his principles made daily progress in Paris, and the importunities of his friends, combined with his own weariness of a quiet life, induced him, even at the advanced age of eighty-four, to revisit Paris. It is recorded, that when the officers of the customs stopped him with the usual inquiry, if he had any contraband goods with him, he replied, “No, no! nothing contraband except myself.” The king, hearing of his arrival, inquired if the decree of the parliament was still in force against him; but nothing further was done to molest him. The intelligence circulated throughout Paris, and scarcely could the arrival of Kien’long or the Grand Lama of Tibet have produced greater excitement. His levees and his couchees were more crowded than those of any emperor; princes and peers thronged his ante-chamber; and when he rode through the streets, his carriage was as the nucleus of a comet whose train stretched far over the city. A hostile journalist of the day says:—

“M. de Voltaire appeared in full-dress on Tuesday for the first time since his arrival in Paris. He had on a red coat

lined with ermine; a large black unpowdered peruke, à la Louis XIV., in which his withered face was so buried that one saw only his two eyes shining like carbuncles. His head was surmounted by a square red cap in the form of a crown, which seemed only laid on, and he carried in his hand a small nibbed cane. The public of Paris laughed a good deal at his strange accoutrement. Doubtless this personage, always singular, is determined to have nothing in common with ordinary men."

From the same hand we give an account of the coronation-ceremony, which is confirmed by other contemporaries:—

"On Monday, M. de Voltaire, resolving to enjoy the triumph which had been so long promised him, mounted his carriage, an azure-colored vehicle, bespangled with gold stars, which a wag called the chariot of the empyrean, and thus he repaired to the Académie Française. Twenty-two members were present. The prelates, abbés, and other ecclesiastics who belonged to it, declined attending, with the exception of the Abbé de Boismon, a court *roué*, with nought of his profession but its vestments; and the Abbé Millot, a *cuisire*, who has no favor to look for either from the court or the church.

"The Académie went out to meet M. de Voltaire. He was led to the director's seat, over which his portrait had been hung; and the assembly, without drawing lots, as is the custom, named him by acclamation director for the April quarter. The old man, once set agoing, would have made a long speech; but they told him they valued his health too much to hear him, and M. d'Alembert occupied the séance by reading his *Eloge de Despréaux*, in which he had inserted various matters flattering to the new President.

"On leaving the Académie, Voltaire set out for the Comédie Française. The immense court of the Louvre was full of people waiting for him, and as soon as his notable vehicle appeared in sight, the cry of '*Le voilà!*' arose, and the acclamations of '*Vive Voltaire!*' resounded as if they would



never end. The Marquis de Vilette came to hand him out of his carriage, the Procureur Clos also lent his arm, but the two could scarcely get him through the crowd. On his entering the theatre, a more elegant throng, seized with true enthusiasm for genius, surrounded him; the ladies especially stopped his way, that they might have a better view of him. Some were seen pressing forward to touch his clothes, some plucking small tufts from his fur.

"The deity of the evening was to occupy the box belonging to the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in which Madame Denis and Madame de Vilette were already seated. The pit was in a perfect uproar, till the poet placed himself on the front seat beside the ladies, when the cry was '*La couronne!*' and Brizard, the actor, advancing, placed the garland on his head. 'Ah, Heaven! will you kill me then?' cried M. de Voltaire, weeping with joy, and resisting the honor. He took the crown in his hand, and presented it to the Marchioness de Vilette; she refused, and the Prince de Beauvau, seizing the laurel, replaced it on the head of our Sophocles, who could resist no longer.

"The piece—*Irène*—was acted, and with more applause than usual, though scarcely sufficient to correspond with this triumph of the author. At the end of the tragedy, the curtain fell, and the tumult of the people was extreme till it rose again, disclosing a spectacle like that of the *Centenaire*. M. de Voltaire's bust had been brought upon the stage, crowned, and elevated on a pedestal; the whole body of players stood round it in a circle, with palms and garlands in their hands; the pealing of drums and trumpets had announced the ceremony; and Madame Vestris recited the following verses with an emphasis proportioned to the extravagance of the scene:—

Aux yeux de Paris enchanté,  
Reçois en ce jour un hommage,  
Que confirmera d'âge en âge,  
La sévère postérité!

Non, tu n'as pas besoin d'atteindre au noir rivage  
 Pour jouir des honneurs de l'immortalité ;  
 Voltaire, reçois la couronne  
 Que l'on vient de te présenter ;  
 Il est beau de la mériter,  
 Quand c'est la France qui la donne !

After an encore of this not very poetical effusion, all the actors went forward, and laid their garlands round the bust. Moreover, Mademoiselle Fanier having kissed it in a moment of ecstasy, all the others followed her example. This long ceremony being over, the curtain again dropped, and when it rose for *Nanine*, one of M. de Voltaire's comedies, the bust was seen on the right-hand side of the stage, where it remained during the whole play.

"*Nanine* finished, comes a new hurley-burley—a new trial for the modesty of our philosopher ! He had got into his carriage, but the people would not let him go. They threw themselves on the horses ; they kissed them ; some young poets even cried to unyoke the animals, and draw the modern Apollo home with their own arms ; but unfortunately there were not enthusiasts enough to volunteer this service, and he was at length allowed to depart, not without *vivats*, which he might have heard on the Pont Royal, or even in his own house.

" M. de Voltaire wept anew on reaching home, and modestly protested, that if he had known the people were to play so many fooleries, he would not have gone."

He did not long survive this farce ; for having overexcited himself by receiving visits, and exhausted his spirits to supply a perpetual fund of conversation, he was seized with a spitting of blood ; and afterwards becoming restless in the night-time, he had recourse to soporific medicine, of which he one night took so large a dose that he slept thirty-six hours, and expired a very short time after awaking. The Marquis de Vilette,

with whom he resided at Paris, had sent for the rector of St. Sulpice when he perceived his end approaching; and of this interview various and very contradictory accounts have been published; but it is certain that he died without the rites of the church; and being refused Christian burial, was secretly interred at a Benedictine abbey between Nogent and Troyes, whence his remains were removed in 1791 by order of the National Assembly, and interred in St. G  n  vi  ve.

Glance we now for a moment at the works of Voltaire. The national enthusiasm which decreed him, as he descended to the tomb, such a triumph as might have honored a benefactor of his race, gave place to doubt and disputation as to his merits; and now enough of time has elapsed for us to consider the judgment of posterity as pronounced. In tragedy, he is admitted to rank after Corneille and Racine. In *  dipe*, and other early productions of this kind, he showed a spirit of obedience to received ideas and models. In *Zaire*, which is his master-piece, there is neither the perfect versification of Racine nor the lofty conception of Corneille; but a warmth of passion, an enthusiasm of feeling, and a gracefulness of expression which fascinates and subdues. In his later dramas he assumes the prerogative of instructing as well as moving his audience; and being now somewhat more than a poet, would render his plays subservient to the same ends as all his other works. Hence the declamation which mars some of his best scenes.

It is as an epic poet that Voltaire has least sustained his renown. In vain he flattered himself that he could give France a heroic poem. It was a thing unsuitable to his genius, and still more to the character of his age. The machinery, consisting of personifications of such abstractions as Discord, Silence, and the Soul of Louis XI., is tame in the extreme, and the want of poetic illusion is severely felt. Nevertheless, the *Henriade* has unquestionably some great beauties: its poetry is not epic, but it is sometimes lofty and pathetic.

The merit of Voltaire's fugitive pieces has rarely been disputed. One of their principal attractions is the insight they give into the thoughts and feelings of the author. One can follow here the progress of the author's mind from childhood to old age—his muse now celebrating the light and voluptuous enjoyments of his youth, the pleasures of friendship, the success of self-interest; afterwards, it has conversed with science, and enlivened it; at a later date, it is in correspondence with kings, and lends to flattery the mask of familiarity; then it describes the luxury of retirement, liberty, and the decline of life; and finally, when old age has certainly arrived, it expresses that vacillation of principle, that uncertainty of opinion, that carelessness with respect to all that is most important to man, and that restlessness of feeling which age had not been able to overcome. His poetry, especially that of his later years, is by no means so disgraceful to the author as the witticisms in prose, the clandestine *brochures* consisting of tales, romances, dialogues, and pasquinades, which his friends eagerly sought for, and which he was always ready to furnish. These are, with little exception, totally unworthy of an honorable man.

It was scarcely possible for a man of so little reflection and so little patience for investigation to attain the true character of a historian. His history of Charles XII., however, which was his first essay, was successful, and deserved to be so; the reason being, that he chose for his hero the most romantic and the most adventurous of sovereigns, to describe whom there was more need of rapid narrative and brilliant coloring than profound knowledge and a just appreciation of human nature. There were no great conceptions to judge of, or secret motives to unravel, for Charles XII. was all in the facts of his history. To depict the reign of Louis XIV. was a much more arduous undertaking; and notwithstanding its *éclat*, this work is far from affording the same interest as the history of the king of Sweden. The more a nation becomes civilized, the more its



history loses the striking and picturesque forms of the older times, and the task of the historian becomes more difficult. We require him to be impartial, and then we blame him for the want of warmth and interest; we want details respecting commerce, the arts, the spirit of the government, and then we complain that the narration of facts is buried under philosophical dissertations. The elder historians had none of these trammels: they wrote with all their prejudices, and never dreamed of impartiality; they related the victories of their country without thinking it necessary to unfold the history of the vanquished; and it was left to the reader to judge of the value that ought to be attached to the narrative, and the confidence that was due to the narrator. It was Voltaire that gave the first example of the new mode of writing history: he sought not only to present a picture, but a series of researches destined to instruct the memory and exercise the judgment. After him the English historians, imitating his mode, surpassed him in erudition and philosophic impartiality. Still later, his own countrymen have carried this species of writing to a high degree of perfection; but in admitting their superiority, it would be unfair to forget what they owe to his example. The faults which have been found in *L'Histoire du Siècle de Louis XIV.* belong also to *L'Essai sur les Mœurs des Nations*; and the latter work has a yet deeper stain. We find in it throughout the traces of that hatred of religion which Voltaire unblushingly adopted in the latter part of his life, and which often hurried him into offences against both good taste and good faith. The style, however, is easy and pleasing; the facts well arranged; the pictures of some eras, and the portraits of some great men, traced with energy and vivacity.

As a literary critic, Voltaire was long reverted to as the great authority; but since a more enlightened mode has been cultivated by Villemain and others in the present age, Voltaire's is seen to be narrow and partial; too much occupied

with matters of style and conventional usage ; too little appreciating the spirit and design of the various authors on whose works he passes judgment.

It remains to say something of Voltaire's opinions with reference to religion, morality, and civil government. Some have attributed to him a serious design of overturning these three great bases of the honor and happiness of society. But whoever would discover in his works anything like a system of philosophy, would have a good deal of trouble, for nothing could be further from the ideas we form of a philosopher than the genius of Voltaire. That he had a design to amuse his age, to exercise an influence over it, and to avenge himself of his enemies, is obvious enough. He lived at a time when morals were depraved, at least in the higher classes of society; and he showed no respect for morality. Envy and hatred employed against him the weapons of religion, which was not respected even by its own partisans, and he viewed it only as an instrument of persecution. His country had a government which commanded no esteem, and did nothing to obtain it, and he assumed the attitude of independence and opposition. Such seem to have been the true sources of those opinions which he continually promulgated, without anticipating the consequences to which they might lead. It is easy to see how they arose, but impossible to excuse them.

Doubtless, Voltaire was naturally gifted with astonishing talents; doubtless, his power of mind was not purely the result of education or of circumstances: but take his life and his writings together, and it is obvious that the employment of his faculties was continually directed by the opinions of the times, and that the desire of popularity was the ruling motive throughout the whole of his course. There was a tacit contract between him and the public, which obliged him to serve it, in order to reign over it. The character of his earlier writings shows that he did not bring into the world a very independent

spirit; they display that lightness and frivolity for which his contemporaries were so remarkable, with the submission of a courtier for every kind of authority. But when the young author, intoxicated with the plaudits of the theatre, and still more with the flattering familiarity of the nobility, saw that he had imposed upon himself unnecessary restraints, and that the more he sported with everything, the better he succeeded in pleasing; then he lost by degrees the reserve which he had at first maintained, and ventured to speak of everything with irreverence. Meanwhile, his success increasing, and his importance growing continually, everything encouraged him to imbue his works with that spirit which found so general a welcome in its more private manifestations. In vain the authority of the civil government endeavored to arrest the impulse which was gaining strength from day to day; in vain this expounder and director of the public mind was imprisoned and exiled. He who attacks what every one respects, may be punished, and with universal approbation; but he who announces opinions which are generally entertained, or at least towards which every one is beginning to lean, finds support on every hand. Even those who sway the authority, and are obliged to punish him, think in some measure as he does, and some among them will be found to protect him. It was thus that Voltaire was only exasperated by exile, and by the condemnation of his books, and that he became a power whose influence was continually on the increase. The further he advanced in his career, and the more audaciously he propagated his views in opposition to religion and government, the more he was rewarded with the renown which he sought. Monarchs became his friends, and almost his flatterers. Opposition only increased his energy, and often made him forget moderation and good taste. Such was the career which conducted him to that old age which might have been so honorable, encircled as he was with glory; a king in the realm of literature, which itself had

taken the highest rank among all the objects of attention among men. Still he was but a constitutional sovereign, and Ferney the council-hall of sceptics. It was only on the brink of the tomb, that, seated on a mount of slowly accumulated popularity, the hitherto limited monarch became absolute; and while the old man shook his hoary locks in defiance of the Deity, before whom he was so soon to appear, the vivats which resounded at his coronation announced that the people had surrendered to their idol the last treasure of a nation—a sense of shame.

Yet frequently in the midst of this intoxication, Voltaire had his misgivings; sometimes he would have resisted the impulse which he had at once received and imparted. In his later works, in the midst of conflicting opinions and contradictory assertions, there are here and there traces of regret, and of a just appreciation of the unhappy spirit which was gaining ground in his country. He alone could have somewhat retarded the course of opinion, which was hurrying on towards devastation and ruin; but he was too thoughtless, too inconstant, too fond of praise and of fashion, to offer it any effectual resistance.

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## XXI.—THE SCEPTICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT TRIUMPHANT.

THE ENCYCLOPEDISTS—THEIR TENETS EXPOUNDED BY CONDILLAC—APPLICATION OF THEIR PHILOSOPHY IN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS OF LITERATURE—D'ALEMBERT—DIDEROT—HELVETIUS—MABLY—VAUVENARGUE—BONNET—J. J. ROUSSEAU'S LIFE AND WORKS—BUFFON—MARMONTEL—LA HARPE—HISTORY—ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT AND BAR—PASTORAL TALES AND FABLES—THE REVOLUTION—POETRY OF ANDRE CHENIER.

THE names of Voltaire and Montesquieu eclipse all others in the first half of the eighteenth century; but the influence



of Voltaire was by far the most immediate and extensive. His talent seemed to correspond with every phase of the national mind, to answer all its longings; and, accordingly, he kept it constantly occupied with his own effusions. The few other writers whose names were heard, engaged but a part of the public, those of one opinion or one coterie; while Voltaire fascinated all. But after he had reached the zenith of his glory—that is, about the middle of the century—there appeared in France a display of various talent, evoked by his example and trained by his instructions, yet boasting an independent existence, and displaying a character in which Voltaire would not fully have recognised that either of his personal opinions or the impulse of his writings. In the works of these men was consummated the literary revolution of which we have marked the beginnings: a revolution more striking than any, perhaps, that any country has witnessed in the same space of time. It was the reaction of freedom too long repressed; and one expects little moderation from a slave who has just broken his chains.

It was no longer a few eminent men that surrendered themselves boldly to the sceptical philosophy which is the grand characteristic of the eighteenth century; writers of inferior note followed in the same path; the new opinions took entire possession of the whole of the literature, and by this means subjugated France, and, as is too well known, co-operated with the state of morals and of government to bring about a fearful revolution.

The influence of the minister, Cardinal Fleury, contributed in some degree to arrest this movement for a time. The old man had talent enough to maintain tranquillity while he lived; but he had neither strength nor foresight to give permanence to his policy. As soon as he was gone, the new opinions obtained absolute empire.

The whole strength of the literature of this age being

directed towards the same end—namely, the subversion of the national institutions, and especially of the national religion—formed, for the first time, a homogeneous body of Science, Literature, and the Arts, and a compact phalanx of all writers under the common name of philosophers. There existed among these men an *esprit de corps*, notwithstanding a good deal of diversity, and even some discord. The women had their share in the maintenance of this league. The salons of Mesdames Geoffrin, Du Defant, and De l'Espinasse, were its favorite resorts; but the great rendezvous was that of the Baron d'Holbach, whence, as from a centre, its doctrines spread far and wide, blasting, like the malaria, whatever it met with on its way that had any connexion with religion, morals, or venerable social customs. Besides Voltaire, who presided over this coterie more in spirit than by his bodily presence, the daily company included Diderot, an enthusiast by nature, a cynic and sophist by profession; D'Alembert, a genius of the first order in mathematics, and distinguished also, though in a less degree, in literature; the malicious Marmontel; the philosopher Helvetius; Raynal, the furious enemy of all modern institutions; the would-be sentimentalist Grimm; and the Baron d'Holbach himself, the host of *La Raison Encyclopédique*. Secondary parts were sustained by affiliated members, such as Hume, Gibbon, Bolingbroke, Walpole, and others. Their plan was to write a book which would, in some sense, supersede all others, itself forming a library containing the most recent discoveries in philosophy, and the best explanations and details on every topic, literary and scientific.

The depositaries of power perceived with distrust the character and tendency of the philosophers. They were not aware that the real evil was in the nation; and they thought to supply a remedy by checking the outward symptoms of its manifestation. When, therefore, they saw the philosophical coterie projecting the great enterprise of an encyclopædia as an im-

mense vehicle for the development of their opinions, the government took the alarm. The parliament and the clergy pronounced its condemnation, and succeeded so far, that the editors were obliged to continue it clandestinely. The consequence was a literary war, which raged furiously; and the obstacles thrown in the way of the publication in part diverted it from its first destination, rendering it a controversial work, instead of an embodiment of the knowledge of the age. Doubtless, this philosophy did carry presages of disorder and destruction; but these were not the most alarming, or most irremediable symptoms. An indolent and selfish monarch, abandoned to pleasure with low courtesans; nobles, who professed immorality without shame; ministers, who occupied themselves only with intrigues; generals, whose military-school had been the *salons*; every right disputed, and therefore every duty disputable: here, indeed, were more dreadful earnestness of a revolution than any set of haughty and audacious philosophers; and the war of the seven years hastened the catastrophe more than the *Encyclopédie*.

To explain more distinctly the philosophy which was the distinguishing characteristic of the eighteenth century. There are two modes of investigating metaphysical science—the one assumes the soul of man as the starting-point, examines its faculties, its operations, the nature of its activities, the mode of its existence. It will be remembered that such was the philosophy of Descartes, and after him of all the eminent thinkers of the seventeenth century; and that this route conducted them to the noblest of sciences—that of religion and moral obligation; but it never led them to the relations of this moral and intellectual being with the external world, or explained the influences received through the organs of sense. These philosophers, not finding anything in the organization of the senses to resolve the problem of man's moral nature, paid little attention to the direct action of external influences,

and gave no satisfactory account of the mutual relations existing between the physical and the intellectual part of human nature.

The men of the eighteenth century had become tired of following out the sublimities and abstractions of the Cartesians, and they took an opposite course. They assumed the reality of external objects as their starting-point, studied their influence on the senses, examined the sensations thus produced with their immediate results, and groped their way as they could in this direction, endeavoring to reach that central point which constitutes the human self. They established as the basis of metaphysics, that it was useless to study the mind, because they did not know its nature; they made of it a sort of vital principle—a neutral or passive faculty, attached by unknown bonds to a certain collection of matter, and they gave all their attention to the relations between man and external objects, or the result of his physical organization. This school of metaphysics was of course always gravitating lower and lower towards the earth, till it had denied the existence of the soul, as the Cartesian philosophy had done that of external objects. Locke, it may be remembered, was the first to open up this path by maintaining that all ideas are primarily derived from without through the organs of sense. Hume undertook thence to prove that there exist no principles of certain knowledge. He saw nothing to determine the succession of the mind's impressions; denied, therefore, that there was any such thing as cause and effect; and inferred that sensation no more proved the reality of the external world than of the internal. He went no further, being content to repose in this ruin of the human intelligence. But his reasoning gave rise to that school of Scotch philosophy, which concluded that since the premises of Locke had led to an absurdity, they must be wrong, and that it was needful, therefore, to construct a system, which did not proceed on the inert and passive nature of the soul



but acknowledged its peculiar properties and modes of operation. About the same time, German philosophy labored to construct the edifice which had crumbled to pieces before the severe reasonings of Hume. But while the neighboring nations thus became the heirs of the labors of Descartes in high philosophy, his own countrymen turned from them with disdain, and followed with confidence the path opened by the science of sensation, nor stopped short of the grossest materialism and positive atheism. Such were the principles of the *Encyclopédie*, explicitly professed in the preliminary discourse. They were not, however, fully developed or clearly explained in this work, but in the writings of CONDILLAC (1715-1780), the head of this school of philosophy.

Condillac's first work, *L'Essai sur l'Origine des Connaissances Humaines* (1746), contains the germ of all that he afterwards published. In the *Traité des Sensations*, he supposed a statue endowed successively with all the senses, in order to show in what manner ideas had their origin. He endeavored sincerely, but in vain, to derive the notion of duty from sensation; and expert as he was in logic, he could not conceal from the most inexperienced eyes the great gulf which his theory left between these two terms.

Few writers have enjoyed more success. He brought the science of thought within reach of the vulgar, by stripping it of everything elevated or complicated; and every one was surprised and delighted to find that philosophy was so easy a thing. It was not perceived that he had lowered his subject, instead of raising his disciples to the comprehension of it.

This new philosophy of mind gave rise to new modes of investigation in almost every department of knowledge, and separated France at once from the foreign schools of the moderns and those of antiquity.

The exact and the natural sciences received a powerful im-

pulse, and made rapid progress. But the principles of religion, morals, politics, eloquence, poetry, and the fine arts, depending as they do on faculties essentially immaterial, could hardly find an existence under the condition of being solely derived by inductions drawn from the attributes of external objects. Having determined not to establish morality on any innate principles of the soul, these philosophers founded it on a fact common to all animated nature—the necessity of being and well-being, whence arises the feeling of self-interest. As for religion, nothing in the physical circumstances of man could afford any direct clue to it. It was impossible to connect it by any line of argument with the ideas derived from sensation, and it was therefore denied a place in their system. Already had deism rejected the evidence of a divine revelation, and abjured the recollections of Christianity, with the peculiar duties arising out of them. Now atheism raised a more audacious front, and proclaimed that all religious sentiment was but the reverie of a disordered mind. The works in which this opinion is most expressly announced, date from the period of the *Encyclopédie*. True, it was not very extensively adopted in its positive form, for impiety more usually wrapped itself in vague incredulity than in dogmatic atheism; yet the atheistic writers did abundance of harm, much more than is generally imagined. They contributed powerfully to demoralize the lower classes of the people; and the effect was all the greater, because extracts from their works were inserted in a number of infamously immoral productions, which were circulated clandestinely, and poisoned the minds of the masses; obscenity thus borrowing a philosophic coloring, and mingling its turpitudes with the principles of irreligion.

Political government could now no longer rest on historical traditions, on positive rights, on ancient laws, or the customs of nations; such considerations furnished no basis in the eyes of a precise and universal science. Society was regarded as a

collection of individuals united for the mutual defence of their interests; and the whole theory of government was to rest on this primary fact. The constitution of a people was the *ensemble* of its customs, its laws, and all its external and internal circumstances, in the same way that the constitution of an individual is made up of all the circumstances which constitute his life. The manner in which this word was insensibly diverted from its original acceptation proves more than any details what was the course of reasoning with reference to political government.

A new science now originated, under the name of Political Economy. The philosophers inquired what was the source of the wealth of citizens and communities, and how the life of a people and its greater or less prosperity depend on the private and commercial relations of individuals and of the whole country. The theory of this circulation of public and private wealth was ingeniously and perspicuously established, and it obtained immense popularity. Almost all Europe welcomed with enthusiasm the systems of public prosperity propounded by the economists; and monarchs did honor to these new legislators. They were really persuaded that these friends of mankind would subjugate both rulers and people by the power of reason, and induce them, by an enlightened calculation of their own interests, to maintain the duties of their respective positions, with justice on the one hand, and subordination on the other. The calculations were all scientific, and no account was made of the diversity of human opinion, or the perversity of human passion.

Language and grammar were still more boldly dealt with. The philosophers, especially Condillac and Duclos, having concluded that thought is the faithful image of external objects, would have language a similarly exact transcript of thought, and every word the invariable expression of the same idea. But as language had been gradually formed by the habits and

necessities of men, and not originally constructed on philosophical principles, it was deemed in want of entire remodelling. It was proclaimed that a perfect idiom would be a collection of signs, each invariably attached to the same idea, and bound to every other by invariable relations. Algebra was declared to be the true model of all language; there was to be no account made of impressions differing in different individuals, or at different times; and no provision for a flexibility which could accommodate speech to the feelings of the speaker. Ideas, according to this theory, were precisely the same in all minds, and it was a matter of indifference that men entertained them differently.

Poetry and eloquence of course found little quarter from such theorists.

Having thus briefly explained the principles generally adopted about the middle of the eighteenth century, and their application to the different branches of human knowledge treated in the *Encyclopédie*, return we to the leading authors of this great work.

D'ALEMBERT had gained, as we have said, deserved renown by his mathematical works; and with this he would doubtless have been content, had he lived in any other age; but the desire of proving himself a universal genius, of which Voltaire had set the example, made him a *littérateur*, and a somewhat frigid one. He is now known chiefly as the author of the *Discours Préliminaire* (1751) of the *Encyclopédie*, which is ranked among the chefs-d'œuvre of the age. Here the author traces the genealogical order of the various branches of human knowledge, marks out the limits of each and its connexion with the rest, with the characters which distinguish them in our minds; he thus raises the encyclopedic tree of the sciences distinct from the historic order of their development; after which he details the history of intellectual culture in Europe



from the revival of letters. This discourse is written in a severe and simple style, adhering closely to the language proper to philosophy, yet rendering clear and palpable the most abstract ideas.

If D'Alembert was somewhat stiff in literature, DIDEROT (1714-1784) was quite the reverse. He had an ardent and irregular sort of mind, like a fire without fuel. The talent of which he gave unquestionable indications had never received any particular application. If he had devoted himself to any one sphere, instead of wandering about in the chaos of contradictory opinions which rose and perished around him, he might have left a lasting reputation, and posterity, instead of merely repeating his name, would have spoken of his works. He tried to remodel the drama, protested against the established rules, and demanded a more exact imitation of nature; but the attempt to become the chief of a new dramatic school led him further from nature than those whom he opposed. He wrote upon morals, as in his *Essai sur le Mérite et la Vertu*; and while showing that he was capable of some warmth of feeling and elevation of thought, he made an obscure and incoherent mélange of this animated tone with the analytic and destructive philosophy of his school. His romances also exhibit a burlesque combination of the love of virtue with shameful cynicism, and low vulgar language. In his *Lettres sur les Aveugles*, he maintains that all our moral ideas are produced by our physical organization. In the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, he proscribes marriage, and invites social man to assume the freedom of the brute creation. On the whole, Diderot may be regarded as a writer injurious at once to literature and to morals.

The most faithful disciple of the philosophy of this age was HELVETIUS (1715-1771), known chiefly by his work *De*

*l'Esprit*, of which the object is to prove that physical sensibility is the origin of all our thoughts. Of all the writers who entertained this opinion, none has presented it in so gross a manner. He maintains, as a necessary consequence, that self-interest is the principle of all our judgments and all our actions; that the intellectual powers are the same among all men equally well organized; and that the passions are the only mode of all development, so that to educate a man is to cultivate his passions. The work was an attempt to combine into a system the principles which he heard professed around him, but his talents were not equal to the task. It would seem that he had been in the habit of hearing, from day to day, contradictory opinions lightly hazarded without object or consistency, though tending always in the same direction. *L'Esprit* is a book composed of such dialogues, and it would seem that the friends of Helvetius had no idea of any reputation arising from the work of their disciple; but a fruitless persecution gave it unexpected celebrity. It was condemned at once by the Sorbonne, the pope, and the parliament. It was burned by the hands of the hangman, and the author was compelled to retract it; after which he travelled in England and Germany, and wrote no more books.

The philosophers have been represented by the most eminent French writers, as generally disinterested and really desirous of the weal of their country and of the human species. Granted that they did not sacrifice their opinions to the lust of gain, and that they showed themselves indifferent to the favor of princes, it is not denied that they were accessible to the seductions of vanity, and that their hearts were not closed against motives of jealousy and hatred. They seem, in short, to have been men of passion rather than of self-interest, too much so even to enter into harmonious co-operation among themselves, or form anything like a sect having a definite object and recognised principles. Their *Encyclopédie* was an

immense dépôt, not only of the doctrines, but of the passions of the eighteenth century, and they themselves were but the mouth-pieces of a reckless people, avenging itself of the bonds in which it had been held. Perhaps there never was a time when books were more intensely the transcript of the national feeling, and in which authors obeyed rather than directed the impulses that surrounded them.

Meanwhile, there were some writers who held themselves aloof from this school of philosophy, and disapproved of it, but who yet drank deeply into the spirit of the times.

The ABBE MABLY, for instance, refused to identify himself with the Encyclopedists; but though pursuing apparently a different course, his labors tended to a similar end. He devoted his life, and that with more industry and seriousness than most of his contemporaries, to study the relations of politics and morals with public order. In his *Principes de Morale* (1774), he investigates the moral constitution of man; seeks to arrive at the true principle of morality, which, according to him, is an enlightened desire of happiness; and gives precepts for the best mode of strengthening this principle in the human heart. His object in the *Entretiens de Phocion*, is to determine the object and lay the basis of healthy policy, which appears to him to be founded upon morality. Far from applauding, he condemned and abhorred the new ideas, the frivolous character, the depraved manners of his compatriots, nor had he much greater esteem for anything else that was either modern or French. Neither the religion, the government, nor the annals of his country commanded his admiration; ancient Greece and Rome were his only models. This spirit is especially displayed in his *Observations sur l'Histoire de France*, in which he refuses to see anything to admire in the earlier days of France, any more than in the present.

It was thus that while the Encyclopedists were seeking primary and unheard-of principles as the foundation of a new political economy, Mably and others recommended forms which were quite as impracticable : not that the abbé desired European constitutions to be remodelled after the ancient fashions ; he did not deem modern nations fit for the experiment. He thus, without being aware of it, was making common cause with those he despised, in hurrying the institutions of the country to destruction, and loosening the already slender bonds which united the members of an old community.

The MARQUIS DE VAUVENARGUE was a man of a different spirit. He had learned in the school of Pascal to fathom the depths of the human heart ; in that of Fénelon, to instruct and encourage it ; his admiration for the writers of the preceding age preserving him from many of the errors that were so rife around him. But while Vauvenargue appreciated with Pascal and Bossuet the weakness of human nature, he had no such firm persuasion of the power of religion to prove its remedy ; he turned, accordingly, to whatever is noble and elevated in man's nature, independent of a positive creed ; he had hope in the human heart from its own resources. Such is the spirit of his *Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit Humain* (1746). "La Vertu," says he, "n'est pas tant l'adhésion à une loi qu'une inclination généreuse, une certaine bonté et vigueur de l'âme ; la vertu est un amour. Les principes de la vertu sont dans la nature, non dans la coutume ni dans la raison. Considérée dans son essence, la vertu est le sacrifice de l'intérêt particulier à l'intérêt général ; jamais ce dernier intérêt ne saurait être servi par les vices ; jamais non plus la vertu n'aboutit au mal de celui qui la pratique. La vertu consiste dans l'action, que rien supplie, dont rien ne dispense. L'action n'aurait point lieu sans les passions. La plus féconde de toutes, la plus analogue à la vertu, c'est



l'amour de la gloire. C'est cet amour, et non la pensée de la mort, qu'il faut proposer à l'homme : la pensée de la mort fait oublier de vivre." Yet more than once there transpires an agonizing peradventure ; the candor of the author would not suppress it : " Si pourtant, comme il est possible, la religion était vraie, tout cet édifice ébranlé demanderait à grands cris d'autres bases." A fearful *if*, it must be admitted.

We turn aside for a moment to notice a metaphysician of this school, who affords a striking example of the close connexion between literature and moral character. A little people living on the French frontier, speaking the same language, reading the same books, and maintaining daily intercourse with its literary metropolis, had the same thirst for knowledge, the same zeal for the progress of the human mind, the same taste for the exact and natural sciences. All, in short, that the eighteenth century had impressed upon France, was felt with at least as much interest in the republic of Geneva. But her morality was strict ; religion was respected ; the operation of the laws was constant and regular ; the power of hereditary custom was strong ; and the intellectual movement did not here imbue society with the spirit of doubt and irreverence ; neither did it attempt to sever the bonds of civil society. CHARLES BONNET (1720–1793), a Genevese of distinguished family, had cultivated natural history in his earlier days ; but having injured his sight by the constant use of the microscope, he abandoned the observation of insects and plants for the analysis of the human mind. He set out from the same point as Condillac. He, too, in his *Essai Analytique sur les Facultés de l'Ame* (1760), had supposed man as a statue, gifted with an unknown principle, which he concluded to possess no peculiar properties, but whose faculties were originated and developed by the action of external objects. Bonnet brought more impartiality into the process of this

creation than any other metaphysician, and avoided many errors of detail which Condillac had committed. But here was the great difference: he labored all his life to reconcile this theory with the moral nature of man and his religious obligations. His own inward persuasion, his habits, the circle in which he lived, kept him firmly attached to these; and in his efforts to reconcile them with his metaphysical speculations, we see better, perhaps, than anywhere else, the impossibility of discovering the duties and destinies of man through the teaching of the senses. Bonnet, not doubting the divine origin of the soul, appears in one of his later works to intimate that all his researches applied not to that immaterial principle, but to a certain physical soul of delicate, mysterious, and subtle formation, by the intervention of which the soul, properly so called, communicates with the body. In his *Palin-génésie*, he endeavors to establish the necessity of a future state, not only for the human race, but for the lower animals.

Another writer, who marched under none of the recognised banners of the day, was JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, of whom it has been said, that if there was a writer of this age who enjoyed an influence peculiar to himself, not yielding to the common movement of the time, it was he.

There need be no scruple in characterizing him as one of the most visionary of mortals; driven by his circumstances to seek virtue and happiness in a world of his own imagining, and contriving, as it would seem, to derive the most exquisite enjoyment from living thus in thought away from the realities of his own life. Without family, without friends, without home, wandering from place to place, from one condition in life to another, he conceived a species of revolt against society, and cherished an inward pride which sometimes became a perfect delirium, with a feeling of bitterness against those civil organizations in which himself could never find a suitable

place. The Encyclopedists had flattered themselves that they had tuned the opinion of all Europe to their philosophical strain, when suddenly they heard his discordant note. He combated their atheism, and materialism, and contempt for moral virtue, for pure deism was his creed. He believed in a Supreme Being, a future state, and the excellence of virtue; but denying all revealed religion, he would have man advance in the paths of virtue freely, proudly, and independently, from love of the thing itself, and not from any sense of duty or obligation.

Rousseau was somewhat late in making his *début* as an author. He was about thirty-eight years of age when his eye was caught by the advertisement of a prize offered by the Academy of Dijon for the best essay in answer to the question: "Has the progress of arts and sciences tended to the corruption or the purification of morals?" The words, as he himself declares, touched a chord that awaked a power latent in his heart, undreamed of before. The picture of society, such as he knew it, in the city which, of all others, boasted the greatest advancement in the cultivation of the arts and sciences, unrolled itself as a scroll before him, blotted and disfigured. And beside it his imagination placed a picture of pristine innocence—of man enjoying the full development of his physical powers, living for each day as it rose, undisturbed by care, by intellectual speculations, by vanity, by emulation—man free from the control of opinion and the tyranny of factitious desires. Words to describe such a condition poured into his mind, clustered on his lips, and demanded a voice. Much had escaped ere he could transfer his thoughts to paper, but enough remained to win for him the reputation of being one of the most eloquent authors that ever lived. The public was delighted with this fascinating representation of the evils of civilization, and the blessedness of a state of pure nature. The freshness and energy of his style, the earnestness with



which he pursued his argument, served instead of sound reason; and the opponents of his views were sufficiently in the wrong to make him appear absolutely right. A new intellectual world opened before him, and the Academy of Dijon proposing another question, afforded the opportunity of further asserting the superiority of the natural man over the nurslings of civilization. He wrote, in short, the romance of nature and the caricature of society. Property, distinction of ranks, mutual duties, the obligations of labor, were boldly attacked; and seeking in imagination a time in which man had no such evils to fear, he went back through all the degrees of civilization to search out the principles which first imposed on the human species the desire and the necessity of living in society. In a future work, *The Social Contract*, he traced the principles of government and laws in the nature of man, and endeavored to show the end which they proposed to themselves by living in communities, and the best means of attaining to this end.

But the two most notable works of Rousseau are his *Julie*, or *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and *Emile*. The former is a kind of romance, owing its interest entirely to the development of character, and not to incident or plot. Its moral object was to demonstrate a principle the reverse of that which regulated French society in those days. Up to the time of marriage, girls were denied the most innocent freedom; but the marriage-ceremony was the proclamation of license which no one thought of questioning within certain bounds. Rousseau's *Julie*, on the other hand, was a young lady who, by the strictest fidelity to the respectable old gentleman to whom she was united in wedlock, made the most ample atonement for a previous error, and established to the author's satisfaction the superior value of conjugal to maidenly virtue, as it is taken for granted that both would be too much to expect from human nature. We are disgusted to find a writer of our own language characterizing this as a work "full of noble sentiments and



elevated morality ; of true and admirable views of life ; and an eloquence burning and absorbing."

*Emile* is a book professedly embodying a system of education in which the thoughts which lie scattered elsewhere are digested and arranged. The author gives himself an imaginary pupil, whom he calls Emilius, the representative of that life of spontaneous development which was Rousseau's beau ideal. The system is that of letting nature perform the greater part of the work ; only as Emilius is not to live in a savage but in a civilized state, he has to be educated in a peculiar manner. The savage learns the use of his various faculties by feeling the wants which call them into exercise : but then his wants are few and simple ; and in order to train Emilius, his tutors must produce artificial wants, to elicit the higher faculties. The teacher inculcates no precept, prescribes no task ; but he is constantly preparing such circumstances to surround the pupil as must infallibly guide him to the desired point. The education is so far natural, that the pupil is led on by his own desires ; but it is artificial, inasmuch as these desires are artificially awakened. What is called learning, is deferred till that comparatively mature age when the boy can be made to feel uneasy at the want of it ; but all crowding of a child's memory with words which he cannot possibly understand is expressly prohibited. So also are fables denounced in which beasts and birds hold converse, as conveying false impressions.\* Every occasion of sorrow is to be carefully removed or avoided : the life of youth is to be happy. In due time, Emilius learns something of the classics and of modern languages ; but he is to consider these as trivial accomplishments, and to regard the mechanic who pursues a

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\* Hence those lines of Cowper :—

I will not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau,  
Whether birds can speak or no, &c.

useful calling as superior to a poet or a philosopher. Though rich, yet in order to be independent of the freaks of fortune, he must learn a trade, and is regularly bound as apprentice to a carpenter. Thus he became Rousseau's ideal of a man; one capable of mixing in any society, yet independent of all. Such was the man believed in at the time of the Revolution, which Rousseau foresaw, and which so shortly followed.

There appears as an episode in this work, the vicar of Savoy's confession of faith, which is a declaration of pure deism, but levelled especially against the various errors of Catholicism. It raised a perfect tempest against the author, and that from every quarter. The Roman Catholics, of course, were incensed; the Calvinistic Genevese joined in the abhorrence; and the material philosophers, displeased with Rousseau's advocacy of a future state, took no pains to shelter him. The Council of Geneva caused his book to be burned by the executioner; the parliament of Paris threatened him with imprisonment, and he was obliged to flee. While vainly seeking shelter in various parts of Switzerland, he wrote his *Letters from the Mountain*, as a sort of defence to the objectionable part of his *Emile*. It displays considerable polemic talent, but it only served to increase the storm. Finding safety nowhere on the continent, he took refuge in England, where he found himself most provokingly in perfect safety—an object of pity and ridicule, not of abhorrence and persecution. Living in obscurity and neglect—not, however, in want, for he was honorably and delicately provided for—in a country whose language he did not understand, he imagined that his enemies had entered into a combination to keep him there, and thus to gain opportunity for calumniating his character and falsifying his writings. It would seem that these thoughts fermented in his brain till a high degree of excitement ensued; and it was under these circumstances that he prepared those

*Confessions* which he believed would prove his vindication before all the world.

Nor only in this life. "Let the trumpet of the last judgment sound when it will," says he in the commencement, "I will present myself before the sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and I will say aloud: 'Here is what I did, what I thought, and what I was.'" The reader who has heard of Rousseau only through writers of a certain school, representing him as the enthusiastic lover of virtue for its own sake, "the father of the church to come," expects to find a life abounding with as much virtue at least as a man may possess without Christian principle. No such thing. Here is a life in which there is not a single feature of greatness; and here is a proclamation of faults—ugly, disagreeable faults—just the sort that, above all others, we should keep to ourselves; and yet the autobiographer would almost persuade us he was virtuous, while giving the clearest proofs that he was not. There is either a dexterous tinselling over of what is wrong, or the putting forward of an accounting cause, or an interesting repentance, to counterbalance the guilt. And then there is in a true and living portraiture such power to establish sympathies between the writer and the reader, that the latter is in danger of pitying and excusing what he ought to abhor.

"Who," says Barante, "has not felt affected and delighted in reading the animated description of those vague reveries; of those hopes continually disappointed, yet continually rising afresh; of those imaginary joys; of those romances of virtue and happiness, always belied, yet always renewed; of those storms which rose in the depths of the heart—in short, of the entire history of this visionary and solitary being? After having thus placed us, by the magic of truth, in his every situation, Rousseau makes us sharers in his every thought, and, so to speak, in his every action. We fall with him into error by an irresistible impulse; we assume his foolish pride;

we see nothing but outrage and injustice ; we become the enemies of all men, and prefer him to all."

Such is confessedly the fascination of this man for his own countrymen ; and perhaps we shall be accused of a most cruel, unpoetic virtue, for presenting the reader with the bare facts, as stated by the autobiographer, divested of the magic which his own pen throws around them.

According to his own account, J. J. Rousseau was a citizen of Geneva, where he was born in the year 1712. His mother died at his birth : his infancy was exceedingly delicate, and he became the idol of his father, a Geneva watchmaker, to whom, as soon as he was able, he used to read while he worked. Ecclesiastical history, Molière, La Bruyère, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the old ponderous romances, formed his early library ; but Plutarch became the favorite. Himself the citizen of a republic, Rousseau easily fancied himself a Greek or Roman while he read ; and his father gazed with admiring horror when he advanced and held his hand over a brasier while reading the history of Scævola. Childhood passed happily away, while all caressed and none opposed. But when the family circle was broken up, and it became necessary for the youth to adopt some mode of earning a livelihood, it was another thing. The business of an attorney proved uncongenial in itself, and that of an engraver from the vulgarity and violence of the master. Beaten and hard-worked, he became idle, timid, and deceitful. The day-dreams founded on the books which he stole time to peruse, filled his heart in solitude ; and while his real life was replete with indignity and suffering, he was enterprising, noble, and free in his reveries. Having, for the third or fourth time, prolonged his Sunday ramble till after the city-gates were shut, and dreading the certain punishment which awaited him on the morrow, he ran away altogether ; turned his steps from his native city, a vagrant and a beggar according to the received opinions of



society, but in his own eyes a hero in search of adventures. He presently fell in with one of those Catholic priests, who, living in the vicinity, were ever on the watch to draw Swiss heretics into the pale of the church. It was easy to persuade the homeless boy to turn the wants of his body to the benefit of his soul, by professing himself a candidate for admission into the Church of Rome. The curé who began the good work, sent him with an introductory letter to a recently converted lady at Annecy. The Countess de Warens, who had thrown herself into the bosom of the church, and under the protection of Savoy, to escape from a disagreeable husband, was beautiful, benevolent, and, as Rousseau will have it, virtuous in heart—that is, we suppose, in imagination, like himself—for the facts as stated by him would prove her a perfect *Mesalina* in a small way. He was sent by her to an institution at Turin for the instruction of proselytes, where he was to remain till his abjuration, when it was supposed some charitable person more wealthy than Madame de Warens would take him by the hand.

Brought up in a Calvinist city, he had a perfect horror of popish ceremonies; yet, believing there was now no escape—starvation staring him in the face—he delayed the fatal act, but at length yielded; was formally received into the church, and absolved of the crime of heresy by a father inquisitor. Twenty francs, collected at the church door, were put into his hands; he was recommended to be faithful to his profession; and being thus dismissed, he found himself alone and friendless in the streets of Turin. Liberty, hope, and the twenty francs were very good company for each other, and for him; but when the money was gone, he was obliged to hire himself as a servant. He became the attendant of an aged countess, who died three months afterwards; and it was during her illness that he committed a fault, the memory of which haunted all his future days, and caused every suffering of his life to

appear as just retribution. During his mistress's illness, he abstracted a ribbon from her wardrobe, intending it as a present to the maid-servant. When it was missed, sought for, and found on him, he declared he had received it from the girl. The two were confronted; the innocent servant implored him with tears to retract the falsehood; but he adhered to his story, and was believed. There was reason to fear she was driven to want and infamy by this affair.

When the death of the countess threw Rousseau again upon the world, his acquaintance with the Abbé Gaime, whom he afterwards immortalized as the vicar of Savoy, introduced him to the service of the Count de Gouvon, who, presently discerning his superiority to the station which he held, treated him accordingly, and permitted a young member of the family to instruct him in Latin and Italian. But it was impossible for Jean Jacques to pursue any career with steadiness. Taking a capricious fancy to a merry fellow, who had been his apprentice-companion in Geneva, and was about to return to that city, our hero threw up his situation with a careless show of ingratitude that disgusted his patrons, and set out again, a wildly happy vagrant, delighted with the prospect of roaming on foot among the mountains and valleys of Savoy. His hope of obtaining food and shelter by the way was built on a toy fountain, which the abbé had given him, and the exhibition of which would, he believed, secure hospitality for himself and his friend. When the fountain was broken by an accident, the two adventurers, instead of breaking their hearts, congratulated themselves on the incident, for they were tired of carrying it.

Rousseau's only resource now was to cast himself on the kindness of Madame de Warens, at Annecy, who received him with compassion; and perceiving he had a taste for music, placed him under the tuition of the master of the cathedral choir. About a year afterwards, the professor quar-

relled with the chapter, and determined to abscond with his case of music on the eve of the holy-week, when his services would be most needed. Madame's expostulations proving vain, she yielded permission to Rousseau to accompany his flight; but they had only got as far as Lyon, when poor Le Maître fell down in an epileptic fit. A crowd collected; and Rousseau, not knowing what to do, left the helpless musician in their hands, scampered back to Annecy, and found to his horror that Madame de Warens had left it. He now entered upon vagabond-life in earnest, and to the characteristics which had already distinguished him, began to add those of a charlatan. At Lausanne, for instance, he made an anagram of his name; and calling himself Vaussore, instead of Rousseau, set up as a singing-master, though he scarcely knew anything about music by his own confession. But the crowning piece of impudence was his composing a cantata for a full orchestra, copying out the different parts, distributing them to the musicians who were to perform at a private concert, attending the brilliant scene in person to explain the style and character of his piece, and beating time with a fine roll of paper. When the grand crash began, "never," says Jean Jacques himself, "was such a charivari heard;" and then came the ironical compliments and the assurances of a lasting immortality. Looking back upon the scene in after-years, he marvels at his own audacity, and declares he can explain it only as a temporary delirium. The notable achievement rendered the town too hot to contain him; and after various wandering adventures, and many privations and sufferings, he again found shelter with Madame de Warens, who had invited him to join her at Chamberi. She obtained for him the situation of clerk or secretary in an office for the valuation of estates, and he actually fulfilled its duties for two years; but a treatise on harmony falling into his hands at the time when an illness confined him to his chamber, he felt his former tastes revive, gave up his situation, and

turned music-master. He was thus thrown into the best society of the town, and found it much more pleasant to spend his time in teaching young ladies, than in making calculations in a close dark office, with low-bred and unkempt clerks.

We may not follow him in detail concerning the nature of the promotion he now received in the domestic establishment of his mistress; suffice it to mention, that having dabbled a little in anatomy, and persuaded himself that he had a polypus on his heart, our hero went to Montpellier for medical advice, and after being laughed at by the doctors, returned to find his place had been supplied in his absence. How did he feel? "Reduced," he says, "to form a fate for myself independent of her, and not being able even to imagine such, I sought it wholly in herself. The desire of seeing her happy engrossed all my feelings. In vain did she separate her happiness from mine: I saw it in hers, in spite of her. Thus the virtues whose seeds were in my soul, and which had been matured by study, began to germinate with my misfortunes, and only waited for the operation of adversity to bud forth." Strange notions of virtue these!

He tells us that, among other fancies that occurred to him at Chamberi, he had a short fit of uneasiness as to his fate in a future life; and that he resolved the mighty problem after a fashion not recognised by any church. He placed himself opposite a tree, and taking up a stone, said: "If I hit, sign of salvation; if I miss, sign of damnation." He did hit; for he had chosen a tree both very large and very near. "From that time," said he at an advanced period of his life, "I never had a doubt of my salvation."

Finding after some time that he had not only irretrievably lost the lady's affection, but that his rival was unworthy of his attempts to improve him, and that his mistress's affairs, moreover, were going to ruin, he hurried from the scene. Paris was now his destination; and as he travelled thither, he felt



as certain of making a fortune by a new method of musical notation which he had invented, as he had once been of travelling over Europe by the exhibition of a Hiero's fountain. His visit did not answer the purpose for which it was undertaken, for his invention was not approved; but it procured him some influential friends, through whom he obtained an appointment as secretary to the French ambassador at Venice. Like every other situation, however, which promised comfort in connexion with steady occupation, this lasted but a short time. Rousseau returned to Paris, formed an acquaintance with Diderot and Grimm, and was well-nigh becoming one of the clique of philosophers, when the discrepancy of his sentiments was discovered, and he became a martyr for the theory of virtue for its own sake, in opposition to virtue only so far as founded in self-interest. About the same time, he took under his protection Thérèse Levasseur, a young girl whom he met at a sort of tavern. He declares he never loved her, and that she was so stupid, he never could hammer a solitary idea into her head; yet she and her mother—a low, ignorant, cunning woman, hung upon him as a drag to the end of his life, towards the close of which he made Thérèse his wife. His children, five in number, were consigned in succession to the foundling hospital, which rendered their after recognition impossible, even had he desired it, which he did not. Such, in practice, was the man who spun a theory of education for the admiration of all France, protested even against a child being given out to be nursed, and demanded that from its earliest infancy it should be surrounded by a parent's watchful care, with everything to render it happy, to make sorrow a feeling unknown, and to lead it by the gentlest arts in the paths of virtue!

These events bring us to the epoch of Rousseau's receiving a new inspiration, and becoming a literary character, as we have already described. Not only did a new world of thought open to him in connexion with his first essay, but the favor

of the public prepared for him a new scene of life ; for, little as we may think of it now, the sensation it created was prodigious, and Rousseau, like Byron, awoke and found himself famous. He had now to sustain, in the habits of his life, the character attached to him as an enemy to the embellishments of civilized humanity ; and accordingly he remodelled his dress, clapped an outré wig on his head, gave up wearing a watch, and was petted by the fine ladies of his acquaintance as a bear. Everything he did seemed to increase his reputation : his opera of *Le Devin du Village* was completely successful, and he might have been presented to Louis XV. had he not declined the honor. He visited Geneva, abjured popery, and was invited to remain among his compatriots ; but he shrunk from living under the shadow of his mortal enemy, Voltaire, who, it will be remembered, was now living in the neighborhood, and intermeddling in the politics of the republic. While he hesitated, Madame d'Epinay offered him a wing of her château, on the borders of the forest of Montmorency, where he might copy music—which was his professional occupation—might meditate, and write tirades against society ; in short, do what he pleased, without being disturbed by Parisian bustle, nor yet lost sight of in the metropolis. But here he was imprudent enough to disturb the peace of the family circle, by falling desperately in love with the sister of his patroness, notwithstanding her having already a professed *amant* as well as a husband, according to the usage of that virtuous age. And now Rousseau believed that Grimm and Diderot, hitherto his friends, were striving to demolish his reputation and destroy his peace, because these philosophers of expediency, being at the same time warm friends of the family, thought it expedient that Rousseau should give up his fancy ; and he, “a lover of virtue for its own sake,” could not find it in his heart to love virtue so much as Madame d'Houdetot. Our philosopher seems actually to have had the notion

—and what is stranger still, there are writers of the present day who sustain it—that he was a solitary lover of truth and hater of faction, existing apart from the corruption of the world, a sort of living reproach to the fashionable *littérateurs* who ruled the day, and shone in the eyes of all Paris.

The *Confessions* of Rousseau end with his literary career, which we have already noticed, the date of both being his residence in England. We touch but lightly on the rest of his life, as we have no longer his own voice to guide us, and we would not be accused of vilifying the idol of France by following any biography which might be hostile. He was permitted to return to Paris, on condition that he should abandon his Armenian dress, and not publish any more. He was received in the most flattering manner; but he was a prey to the most poignant mental anguish, and seemed even to luxuriate in his horrors, frequently repeating a stanza of Tasso, which described his own situation. It is even said that his countenance was so changed as to be unrecognisable by those who were most familiar with it. On the 3d of July, 1778, he died suddenly at the *château* of a friend, and not without suspicion of suicide.

As an apostate from the church, he could not be buried in consecrated ground, and was therefore quietly interred by moonlight in the gardens of the *château*. On his tomb was inscribed:—

ICI REPOSE  
L'HOMME DE LA NATURE  
ET DE LA VÉRITÉ.  
VITAM IMPENDERE VERO.

With what truth, let the reader judge.

Such was in Rousseau's case the discrepancy between theory and fact, between dreaming of virtue and living virtuously.

The following is a description from his own pen of his mode of day-dreaming:—

## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU A MALESHÉRBES.

Après vous avoir exposé, monsieur, les vrais motifs de ma conduite, je voudrais vous parler de mon état moral dans ma retraite ; mais je sens qu'il est bien tard ; mon âme aliénée d'elle-même est toute à mon corps. Le délabrement de ma pauvre machine l'y tient de jour en jour plus attachée et jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'en sépare enfin tout à coup. C'est de mon bonheur que je voudrais vous parler, et l'on parle mal du bonheur quand on souffre.

Mes maux sont l'ouvrage de la nature, mais mon bonheur est le mien. Quoi qu'on en puisse dire, j'ai été sage, puisque j'ai été heureux autant que ma nature m'a permis de l'être : je n'ai point été chercher ma félicité au loin ; je l'ai cherchée auprès de moi, et l'y ai trouvée. *Spartien* dit que *Similis*, courtisan de Trajan, ayant sans aucun mécontentement personnel quitté la cour et tous ses emplois, pour aller vivre paisiblement à la campagne, fit mettre ces mots sur sa tombe : *J'ai demeuré soixante et seize ans sur la terre, et j'en ai vécu sept.* Voilà ce que je puis dire, à quelque égard, quoique mon sacrifice ait été moindre ; je n'ai commencé à vivre que le 9 mai 1756.

Je ne saurais vous dire, monsieur, combien j'ai été touché de voir comme vous m'estimiez le plus malheureux des hommes. Le public sans doute en jugera comme vous, et c'est encore ce qui m'afflige. Oh ! que le sort dont j'ai joui n'est-il connu de tout l'univers ! chacun voudrait s'en faire un semblable ; la paix régnerait sur la terre : les hommes ne songeraient plus à se nuire ; et il n'y aurait plus de méchants quand nul n'aurait d'intérêt à l'être. Mais de quoi jouissais-je enfin quand j'étais seul ? De moi, de l'univers entier, de tout ce qui est, de tout ce qui peut être, de tout ce qu'a de beau le monde sensible, et d'imaginable le monde intellectuel ; je rassemblais autour de moi tout ce qui pouvait flatter mon cœur ; mes désirs étaient la mesure de mes plaisirs. Non, jamais les plus voluptueux n'ont connu de pareilles délices, et j'ai cent fois plus joui des chimères qu'ils ne font des réalités.

After describing the beauties of his country residence (at the Hermitage), he goes on :—

Mon imagination ne laissait pas longtemps déserte cette terre ainsi parée. Je la peuplais bientôt d'êtres selon mon cœur, et chassant bien loin l'opinion, les préjugés, toutes les passions factices, je trans-



portais dans les asiles de la nature des êtres dignes de les habiter. Je m'en formais une société charmante, dont je ne me sentais pas indigne ; je me faisais un siècle d'or à ma fantaisie, et remplissant ces beaux jours de toutes les scènes de ma vie qui m'avaient laissé de doux souvenirs, et de toutes celles que mon cœur pouvait désirer encore, je m'attendrissais jusqu'aux larmes sur les vrais plaisirs de l'humanité ; plaisirs si délicieux, si purs, et qui sont désormais si loin des hommes. Oh ! si dans ces moments quelque idée de Paris, de mon siècle et de ma petite gloriole d'auteur, venait troubler mes rêveries, avec quel dédain je la chassais à l'instant, pour me livrer sans distraction aux sentiments exquis dont mon âme était pleine ! Cependant au milieu de tout cela, je l'avoue, le néant de mes chimères venait quelquefois la contrister tout à coup. Quand tous mes rêves se seraient tournés en réalités, ils ne m'auraient pas suffi ; j'aurais imaginé, rêvé, désiré encore. Je trouvais en moi un vide inexplicable, que rien n'aurait pu remplir ; un certain élanement de cœur vers une autre sorte de jouissance dont je n'avais pas d'idée, et dont pourtant je sentais le besoin. Eh bien, monsieur, cela même était jouissance, puisque j'en étais pénétré d'un sentiment très-vif et d'une tristesse attirante, que je n'aurais pas voulu ne pas avoir.

Bientôt, de la surface de la terre, j'élevais mes idées à tous les êtres de la nature, au système universel des choses, à l'être incompréhensible qui embrasse tout. Alors, l'esprit perdu dans cette immensité, je ne pensais pas, je ne raisonnais pas, je ne philosophais pas ; je me sentais avec une sorte de volupté accablé du poids de cet univers ; je me livrais avec ravissement à la confusion de ces grandes idées ; j'aimais à me perdre en imagination dans l'espace ; mon cœur resserré dans les bornes des êtres s'y trouvait trop à l'étroit, j'étouffais dans l'univers, j'aurais voulu m'élancer dans l'infini. Je crois que si j'eusse dévoilé tous les mystères de la nature, je me serais senti dans une situation moins délicieuse que cette étourdissante extase à laquelle mon esprit se livrait sans retenue, et qui, dans l'agitation de mes transports, me faisait écrier quelquefois, O grand Etre ! sans pouvoir dire ni penser rien de plus.

Ainsi s'écoulaient, dans un délire continuel, les journées les plus charmantes que jamais créature humaine ait passées : et quand le coucher du soleil me faisait songer à la retraite ! étonné de la rapidité du temps, je croyais ne pas avoir assez mis à profit ma journée, je pensais pouvoir en jouir davantage encore ; et pour réparer le temps perdu, je me disais : Je reviendrai demain.

Less happy than Pygmalion, who, having made an ivory image of a maiden, and fallen in love with it, prayed that life might be breathed into it, and was blest in the realization of his fancy—Rousseau “created an ideal; but he saw the impossibility of its realization in the world, gnashed his teeth at actualities, and sunk in despair and madness.”

To Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, must be added Buffon, and then we have named four writers of this age who left all their contemporaries far behind.

GEORGES LOUIS LECLERC, afterwards COMTE DE BUFFON, was born at Montbar, in Burgundy, in the year 1707. His father, who was counsellor to the parliament of Dijon, gave him every advantage of fortune and education, and allowed him to choose his own career. It is believed that he imbibed his love of the study of nature from an English gentleman travelling with his pupil, the Duke of Kingston, whom he joined, and with whom he visited various parts of France, Italy, and England. He first attracted notice by some experiments in rural economy, and communications to the Academy of Sciences, of which he was admitted a member in 1739. About the same time, he was appointed superintendent of the Jardin du Roi, first formed by Louis XIII., and now by successive improvements become an important establishment. From this time, devoting himself entirely to the study of natural history, he made it his pride to extend and enrich the fine establishment of which he had the charge; to gather into it from all parts of the world the various productions of nature, he built in it a museum, galleries, conservatories; and, proudly happy in the midst of these treasures, conceived the project of composing a natural history which should embrace the whole immensity of being, animate and inanimate. He first laid down a theory of the earth; then treated the natural history of man; afterwards that of viviparous quadrupeds and

birds. The first volumes of his work appeared in 1749; and in the course of subsequent years, supplementary matter was added at various intervals, the most important of these later treatises being *Les Epoques de la Nature*.

Buffon was an indefatigable student; and his industrious disposition was favored by a robust and healthy constitution. It is said that a domestic had orders to awake him every morning at dawn, in the name of science; and that he sometimes studied fourteen hours without intermission. Yet even thus he could not have overtaken all the details of the work before him, and was therefore happy in finding several talented coadjutors. He gave incredible attention to his style; and is considered one of the most brilliant writers of the eighteenth century. No naturalist has surpassed, or even nearly equalled him, in the magnificence of his theories, hypothetical though they are; or the animation of his description of the manners and habits of animals. Perhaps there never has been a writer more difficult to please in the choice of his expressions, and the harmony of his periods. It is said that he wrote the *Epochs of Nature* eleven times over. He not only recited his compositions aloud, in order to judge of the rhythm and cadence, but he made a point of being in full-dress before he sat down to write, believing that the splendor of his habiliments had an effect upon his mind, and impressed his language with that pomp and elegance which he so much admired, and which, rather than flexibility or pathos, is his distinguishing characteristic. This love of dress, with his dignified carriage and air of superiority, procured for him the sobriquet of the Comte de Tuffière.

Few writers have enjoyed such a long career, apparently so happy, attended with so much renown, and checkered with so little hostility. He was received at court by Louis XV., who created him Comte de Buffon; Frederic the Great, King of Prussia, and Catherine II., empress of Russia, in common



with several other distinguished individuals in foreign countries, used to send him objects of interest in connexion with his favorite pursuits; and during the war with America, even the English corsairs respected and spared the bearers of specimens from the New World addressed to the great naturalist. He was elected a member of the French Academy in 1753, on which occasion he delivered the discourse on Style, of which some passages are given below. While maintaining friendship with the celebrated men of his age, he did not identify himself with the party of the Encyclopedists, Economists, and Philosophers, or the sects into which they were divided; he espoused none of their quarrels, nor entertained their animosities, nor shared their humiliations. He said the path of fame was broad enough for all without any jostling. Keeping thus out of literary and political cabals, he had no persecutors; and he even managed to appease the Sorbonne, by declaring that he would be happy to subject his opinions to the laws of religion. His great rival was Linnæus, whose attention was directed to similar objects, but in a totally different manner. Buffon was the man of large general views; Linnæus, of close observation: the one, a telescopic—the other, a microscopic naturalist. Buffon would write a splendid description, Linnæus, a careful definition; Buffon hated the classification for which Linnæus was so celebrated; he had no patience for making natural history a mere nomenclature—a collection of naked facts, held together by artificial ties; he would at once penetrate the secrets of Nature, and present her under her most picturesque aspects; and he treated with some degree of levity and contempt the labors of the gifted Swede. Linnæus made no direct reply, but took an immortal revenge, by naming after him (*Buffonia*) a marsh-plant which affords shelter to toads.\*

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\**Bufo* is the Latin of Toad.



It was the custom of Buffon to spend the summer on his own estate of Montbar, and the winter at the royal gardens. He married late in life, and had only one son, who fell a victim to the revolutionary tribunal in 1793, five years after the old man had died at Paris, in 1788, at the age of eighty-one.

No one now thinks of maintaining Buffon's theory of the earth: that a comet dashed against the sun, and struck off fragments, which presently formed themselves into planets, at first hot, vitrified masses, but afterwards cooling by degrees, some more quickly than others; that organized beings successively sprung into life on their surfaces as the temperature abated; and that these organic beings are all compounded of certain uniform and indestructible molecules, which only pass through different processes, and arrange themselves in different forms to produce the varieties of vegetable and animal nature. But while we smile at the splendid but now exploded hypotheses of Buffon, be it remembered that the fascination of his eloquent pages served to awaken that interest in the subject which has given the world a host of intelligent naturalists, and among them the great Cuvier himself. The desire of explaining—a disposition to search into causes—a passion for theorizing and generalization—are the early and necessary aliment of every science. It is the expectation of discovering some great secret of nature that has inspired, in the first instance, the wish to search into its details; and hope has kept emulation alive till more solid and useful results have been attained than those which were sought. It behoves us to honor a noble genius even in its mistakes, if it gives an impulse which leads others into the right path.

We must do this, however, in Buffon's case with qualification, and remark with disapproval the atheism which pervades his system. The writings of this author exhibit distinctly the general features of the eighteenth century. In the previous age, Descartes, like him, had desired to become acquainted

with nature, but his curiosity was directed to the union of the moral and the physical in man; and Pascal reproached him with having done what he could to dispense with the Supreme Being in his speculations. Buffon lived among men who deemed physical nature alone worthy of study, and the wits of the age had succeeded in discovering how a Supreme Being might be dispensed with. Buffon evaded the subject entirely; ignored a creator in his universe; and, amid all his lofty soarings, showed no disposition to rise to the Great First Cause.

Few authors attempted to imitate Buffon. After his time, natural science began to follow other methods. It was brought entirely into the domain of experience, and lost at once its contemplative and poetical character to acquire that of intelligent observation. It became a practical thing, and entered into close alliance with the arts. The arts and sciences thus combined became the glory of France, as literature had been in the preceding age.

#### SUR LE STYLE: DISCOURS DE RÉCEPTION A L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE.

Il s'est trouvé dans tous les temps des hommes qui ont su commander aux autres par la puissance de la parole. Ce n'est néanmoins que dans les siècles éclairés que l'on a bien écrit et bien parlé. La véritable éloquence suppose l'exercice du génie et la culture de l'esprit. Elle est bien différente de cette facilité naturelle de parler, qui n'est qu'un talent, une qualité accordée à tous ceux dont les passions sont fortes, les organes souples et l'imagination prompte. Ces hommes sentent vivement, s'affectent de même, le marquent fortement au dehors, et, par une impression purement mécanique, ils transmettent aux autres leur enthousiasme et leurs affections. C'est le corps qui parle au corps; tous les mouvements, tous les signes concourent et servent également. Que faut-il pour émouvoir la multitude et l'entraîner? Que faut-il pour ébranler la plupart même des autres hommes et les persuader? un ton véhément et pathétique, des gestes expressifs et fréquents, des paroles rapides et sonnantes. Mais pour le petit nombre de ceux dont la tête est ferme, le goût délicat et le sens exquis, et qui, comme vous, messieurs, comptent pour peu le ton, les gestes et le vain son des mots, il faut des choses, des pensées,

des raisons ; il faut savoir les présenter, les nuancer, les ordonner : il ne suffit pas de frapper l'oreille et d'occuper les yeux ; il faut agir sur l'âme et toucher le cœur en parlant à l'esprit.

Le style n'est que l'ordre et le mouvement qu'on met dans ses pensées. Si on les enchaîne étroitement, si on les serre, le style devient fort, nerveux et concis ; si on les laisse se succéder lentement, et ne se joindre qu'à la faveur des mots, quelque élégants qu'ils soient, le style sera diffus, lâche et traînant.

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Pourquoi les ouvrages de la nature sont-ils si parfaite ? C'est que chaque ouvrage est un tout, et qu'elle travaille sur un plan éternel, dont elle ne s'écarte jamais ; elle prépare en silence le germe de ses productions ; elle ébauche par un acte unique la forme primitive de tout être vivant ; elle la développe, elle la perfectionne par un mouvement continu et dans un temps prescrit. L'ouvrage étonne, mais c'est l'empreinte divine dont il porte les traits qui doit nous frapper. L'esprit humain ne peut rien créer ; il ne produira qu'après avoir été fécondé par l'expérience et la méditation. Ses connaissances sont les germes de ses productions ; mais s'il imite la nature dans sa marche et dans son travail, s'il s'élève par la contemplation aux vérités les plus sublimes, s'il les réunit, s'il les enchaîne, s'il en forme un tout, un système par la réflexion, il établira sur des fondements inébranlables des monuments immortels.

C'est faute de plan, c'est pour n'avoir pas assez réfléchi sur son objet, qu'un homme d'esprit se trouve embarrassé, et ne sait par où commencer à écrire ; il aperçoit à la fois un grand nombre d'idées ; et comme il ne les a ni comparées, ni subordonnées, rien ne le détermine à préférer les unes aux autres. Il demeure donc dans la perplexité ; mais lorsqu'il se sera fait un plan, lorsqu'une fois il aura rassemblé et mis en ordre toutes les pensées essentielles à son sujet, il s'apercevra aisément de l'instant auquel il doit prendre la plume, il sentira le point de maturité de la production de l'esprit, il sera pressé de la faire éclore, il n'aura même que du plaisir à écrire ; les idées se succéderont aisément, et le style sera naturel et facile ; la chaleur naîtra de ce plaisir, se répandra partout, et donnera de la vie à chaque expression ; tout s'animera de plus en plus, le ton s'élèvera, les objets prendront de la couleur, et le sentiment, se joignant à la lumière, l'augmentera, la portera plus loin, la fera passer de ce que

l'on dit à ce que l'on va dire, et le style deviendra intéressant et lumineux.

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Pour bien écrire il faut donc posséder pleinement son sujet, il faut y réfléchir assez pour voir clairement l'ordre de ses pensées, et en former une suite, une chaîne continue, dont chaque point représente une idée ; et lorsqu'on aura pris la plume, il faudra la conduire successivement sur ce premier trait, sans lui permettre de s'en écarter, sans l'appuyer trop inégalement, sans lui donner d'autre mouvement que celui qui sera déterminé par l'espace qu'elle doit parcourir. C'est en cela que consiste la sévérité du style ; c'est aussi ce qui en fera l'unité et ce qui en réglera la rapidité ; et cela seul aussi suffira pour le rendre précis et simple, égal et clair, vif et suivi. A cette première règle dictée par le génie, si l'on joint de la délicatesse et du goût, du scrupule sur le choix des expressions, de l'attention à ne nommer les choses que par les termes les plus généraux, le style aura de la noblesse. Si l'on y joint encore de la défiance pour son premier mouvement, du mépris pour ce qui n'est que brillant, et une répugnance constante pour l'équivoque et la plaisanterie, le style aura de la gravité, il aura même de la majesté. Enfin, si l'on écrit comme l'on pense, si l'on est convaincu de ce que l'on veut persuader, cette bonne foi avec soi-même, qui fait la bienséance pour les autres et la vérité du style, lui fera produire tout son effet, pourvu que cette persuasion intérieure ne se marque pas par un enthousiasme trop fort, et qu'il y ait partout plus de candeur que de confiance, plus de raison que de chaleur.

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Ici, messieurs, l'application serait plus que la règle, les exemples instruiraient mieux que les préceptes ; mais comme il ne m'est pas permis de citer les morceaux sublimes qui m'ont si souvent transporté en lisant vos ouvrages, je suis contraint de me borner à des réflexions. Les ouvrages bien écrits seront les seuls qui passeront à la postérité. La quantité des connaissances, la singularité des faits, la nouveauté même des découvertes ne sont pas de sûrs garants de l'immortalité ; si les ouvrages qui les contiennent ne roulent que sur de petits objets, s'ils sont écrits sans goût, sans noblesse et sans génie, ils périront ; parce que les connaissances, les faits et les découvertes s'enlèvent aisément, se transportent, et gagnent même à être mises en œuvre par des mains plus habiles. Ces choses sont hors de l'homme, le



style est l'homme même. Le style ne peut donc ni s'enlever, ni se transporter, ni s'altérer; s'il est élevé, noble, sublime, l'auteur sera également admiré dans tous les temps; car il n'y a que la vérité qui soit durable et même éternelle. Or, un beau style n'est tel, en effet, que par le nombre infini des vérités qu'il présente. Toutes les beautés intellectuelles qui s'y trouvent, tous les rapports dont il est composé sont autant de vérités aussi utiles, et peut-être plus précieuses pour l'esprit humain, que celles qui peuvent faire le fond du sujet.

Le sublime ne peut être que dans les grands sujets. La poésie, l'histoire et la philosophie ont toutes le même objet, et un très-grand objet: l'homme et la nature. La philosophie décrit et dépeint la nature; la poésie la peint et l'embellit; elle peint aussi les hommes, elle les agrandit, elle les exagère, elle crée les héros et les dieux; l'histoire ne peint que l'homme, et le peint tel qu'il est; ainsi le ton de l'historien ne deviendra sublime que quand il fera le portrait des plus grands hommes, quand il exposera les plus grandes actions, les plus grands mouvements, les plus grandes révolutions; et partout ailleurs, il suffira qu'il soit majestueux et grave. Le ton du philosophe pourra devenir sublime toutes les fois qu'il parlera des lois de la nature, des êtres en général, de l'espace, de la matière, du mouvement et du temps, de l'âme, de l'esprit humain, des sentiments, des passions; dans le reste, il suffira qu'il soit noble et élevé; mais le ton de l'orateur ou du poète, dès que le sujet est grand, doit toujours être sublime, parce qu'ils sont les maîtres de joindre à la grandeur des sujets autant de couleur, autant de mouvement, autant d'illusion qu'il leur plaît; et que, devant toujours peindre et toujours agrandir les objets, ils doivent aussi partout employer toute la force et déployer toute l'étendue de leur génie.

The declining years of Voltaire, Buffon, and Rousseau, witnessed no rising genius of similar power; but a secondary rank was occupied by some authors that deserve mention.

The rage for philosophy had left little room for poetry, and the drama was that branch of literature that most sensibly felt the decay, resulting from the preponderance of the new studies. A few tragedies were written in imitation of those already in existence—works of art, not fruits of inspiration; some come-

dies, full of exaggerated feeling and pompous language, besides the dramas of Lemierre and Dubelloy, which had some native merits, but not sufficient to detain the reader in a treatise like the present.

The only eminent successor of the great pulpit orators of the seventeenth century seems to have been THOMAS, who cultivated funeral oration in a pompous and often affected style, as though he forgot that the secret of eloquence lies in the thought, and not in an artificial arrangement of words. In his *Eloge de Marc-Aurèle*, however, which is his best, he has attained to strains at once elevated and pathetic.

J. F. MARMONTEL\* is distinguished as the writer of *Bélisaire*, a historico-philosophical romance, of which the first few chapters remind us of the style of *Télémaque*. In his *Contes Moraux*, he exhibits with considerable charm the life and manners with which he was surrounded, but displays too little taste in the selection of his language, and probably as little fidelity, for there is no reason to believe that the general corruption of manners had induced so great depravation of speech as these stories would convey. He appears to greater advantage in his *Elémens de Littérature*, which include the articles he had furnished to the *Encyclopædia*. The desire of distinguishing himself by a sort of revolt against received opinions, had led him at first into some paradoxes, which he defended indifferently, and gradually renounced. In this work he follows the route opened by Fénélon in the *Dialogues* and *Les Lettres sur l'Eloquence*, and by Montesquieu in his *Essai sur le Goût*: he analyzes with considerable delicacy the kind of feeling which characterizes the different forms of literary composition; inquires into the causes which may influence and modify this feeling; and abandoning rules which can never give birth

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\* See Marmontel's Autobiography, London, 1827.

to real talent, he teaches how works of imagination ought to be felt, instead of being coldly compared with prescribed models, and judged according to their greater or less conformity with received precedents. Marmontel endeavors to lead his readers to the enjoyment of literature, instead of detaining them with frigid criticism.

The same was the forte of M. DE LA HARPE, who had even in a greater measure than Marmontel this feeling of literature. Some of his works still maintain their place, though they have little claim to originality. He was sometimes graceful in minor poetry; but his reputation rests entirely on his success as a critic. During the whole of his life he was scattering in the periodicals the materials which he afterwards collected under the title of *Cours de Littérature*. He did not occupy himself as Marmontel had done, with general principles, but examined how these had been applied in the composition of such and such particular works, and endeavored especially to awaken in his readers the feelings which these works had elicited in his own mind. No one has shown greater enthusiasm than La Harpe in this kind of writing; but he is dogmatic in his opinions; carries no reserve or hesitation in his decisions; and seems not to suspect that his friendships and his animosities have often guided his criticisms more than pure literary taste. It is to be observed, also, that he pays too much attention to the mere art of composition, neglecting to observe the feeling which dictated it, the circumstances which influenced the author, and the peculiar character of his talent. He had, besides, a very superficial appreciation of ancient and foreign literature. Few have displayed greater eloquence than M. de La Harpe in literary criticism; but subsequent writers have shown greater penetration and more careful analyzation.

Numerous writers devoted themselves to history in the eighteenth century; but the spirit of French philosophy was

uncongenial to this species of composition, and this age does not afford one remarkable historian. There were, however, elegant translations made of the best works of the English historians, which were considered models of the methods to be followed in this study. But they had no rivals in France. It would have been almost too much to expect of a French *littérateur* that he should divest himself of the spirit of his own age to transport himself into the past, and make himself contemporaneous with it. In his eyes, the present was too far above all those that had preceded it, to allow him to descend from it for a moment. He would have considered himself to be falsifying his judgment, if he had endeavored to sympathize with, or even to imagine the sentiments of his predecessors. People had begun to have such a high estimation of human reason, and of the degree of perfection to which it had attained, that in every kind of study they sought for positive notions. They cared little to know what others had thought or felt upon certain facts; every one wished to have them at his own disposal, in order to deduce from these premises an entirely new series of deductions. To facilitate this work, it was necessary to reduce as much as possible the number of primary notions, and especially to rid them of all particular coloring. It was thus that historical works became dry narrations of facts, without any bond of union, or anything like consecutive reasoning, and history was deprived of all that which imparts a lively and well-sustained interest to its recitals. No one could compose a tableau traced with conscience and feeling, but some made abridgments or extracts divested of all the charm of details. Their brevity appeared intended to aid the memory, but must have failed in this respect; for one cannot retain easily what has excited no interest. The president, Hénault, gave the first model of these skeletons of history. His talent was worthy of better occupation.



Others gave more extent to their works, but it was employed in arguing and developing their theories. With them, facts were valuable chiefly as arguments, and the opinions of a historian were of more importance than his narrative. Condillac was the most voluminous writer in this style, and no one more fully displayed its defects. The Abbê RAYNAL was the most renowned, his fame resting chiefly on his *History of the Two Indies*. It is difficult to conceive how a sober man could have arrived at such delirium of opinion, and how he could exhibit with such complaisance a set of principles which tended to the overthrow of the whole system of society. Scarcely a crime was committed during the Revolution with which this century closed, but could find its advocate in this declaimer. It is to be remarked however, that when Raynal found himself actually in the midst of the turmoils he had suggested, he behaved with justice, moderation, and courage; so dangerous is it to place confidence in opinions which are not the fruit of experience. An author immured in his study, ignorant of men and of public affairs, gets inflamed by his own discourses; war, revolution, the effusion of torrents of blood, the destruction of entire races of men, appear to him only a grand performance to celebrate the triumph of his opinions. It would be cowardly to change his course of thought in the midst of the imaginary fracas. But he lays down his pen, and again becomes what he really is—a lover of peace, and gentleness, and humanity; himself would detest in the mouth of another the words he has put on paper. Such an author was Raynal.

The *Recueil de l'Académie des Inscriptions* deserves mention here, as embodying the learned labors of a society which preserved somewhat of the spirit of the old authors. They were engrossed with researches, which they prosecuted for love of the study, and not of public approval. They thus acquired a spirit of healthy criticism, and gradually emancipated themselves from the superstition which the writers of

the preceding age had mingled with all their antique studies. Instead of judging antiquity by modern principles, or investing it with modern habiliments, they strove to reproduce its own color and character in their purity, and classic translations became more faithful. These savans devoted themselves to a still more interesting branch of antiquarian study in the examination of the old romances of their own country; and they brought to light much that was valuable in connexion with its early chivalrous institutions and manners.

The days of true religious eloquence were past; both the orators and the auditors were changed. Faith was extinct in the greater part of the community, cold and timid among the rest. People no longer resorted to the churches to hear the announcement of truths venerated in every heart; nor entered the sacred precincts with feelings attuned to sympathy with what they were to hear and see. The churches were attended from curiosity to criticise the word, not to receive it; to see whether the preacher got skilfully out of the difficulty of treating matters which were neither believed nor revered by his hearers; and a sermon was listened to with the same dispositions as an academic discourse on a disputed theory. To grapple with this unhappy tendency would have needed a set of bold and fervid orators, deeply read in the science of theology, and animated with a faith, grieved, but not shaken by the infidelity of the age. Unfortunately, however, the people generally have greater influence on their orators than their orators have on them. The preachers of the time now under review fulfilled their office with a sort of timidity and reserve; they were afraid of offending against the fashion, and seemed ever begging its pardon, both for their vocation and their discourses. In deference to the taste of their auditors, they kept out of view whatever was purely religious, and enlarged on those topics which coincided with merely human morality. Religion was introduced only as an accessory which

it was necessary to disguise as skilfully as possible, in order to escape derision. Genuine pulpit eloquence was out of the question under these circumstances.

Forensic eloquence had been improving in simplicity and seriousness from the commencement of the eighteenth century ; but now a concurrence of circumstances led the men of the law to turn their attention to general views ; to trace out universal principles, rather than discuss isolated facts. The eloquence of the bar thus acquired more extensive interest, though perhaps it departed somewhat from its true vocation ; the factums of advocates, and the addresses of magistrates, began to take a place in general literature. The government contributed to give this new spirit to forensic eloquence, and unconsciously to render it a hostile power. Whether tyrannical in practice or not, it professed the principles of absolute despotism, and acknowledged no rights but its own ; while the magistrates charged with defending the privileges of the citizen opposed these pretensions, and argued the case before the world. Throughout the kingdom, the advocates and the tribunals discussed questions of liberty, the limits of authority, the constitution of the Christian republic. Resistance on the one hand led to extremities on the other ; and the controversy, which is now almost forgotten, had a powerful effect on the minds of the lawyers, giving them habits of treating general questions, and furnishing them with weapons both of reason and erudition, which had not been thought of before.

We are thus brought close upon the epoch of the dreadful dénouement—the time when the national spirit was not to be traced in books but in actions. The reign of Louis XV. had been marked with general disorder ; the king had become more and more degraded in his own way of life ; and while he was sinking into the grave amid the scorn of the people, the

magistrates were punished for opposing the royal authority, and the public were indignant at the arbitrary proceeding. BEAUMARCHAIS became the organ of this feeling, and his memoirs, like his comedies, are replete with enthusiasm, cynicism, and buffoonery. Their hardihood, however, was at least equalled by their success. Literature was now regarded as the universal and powerful instrument which it behooved every man to possess; every class was anxious to adopt the ideas of the superior class; literature was never so popular; the theatres, almanacs, and romances of the lowest class, were filled with the fashionable opinions, and diffused them among the masses. A traveller, who visited France at this time after an absence of some years, declared that the most remarkable change he observed, was that what used to be said in the *salons* was now heard in the streets. It was thus that all grades of society were filled with authors and philosophers; some of them, of course, being satisfied with mere verbiage instead of well-digested thoughts. The journals lent their aid to this disposition; they had ceased to be depositories of serious opinions on matters of science and literature; they were now published at shorter intervals, got up with greater facility, and perused with less reflection.

In short, the public mind was tending towards some change without exactly knowing what it would have. From the monarch on the throne—Louis XVI.—to the lowest of the people, all were eager for a new order of things; for all perceived the utter discordance that prevailed between existing institutions and existing opinions.

In the midst of the dull murmur which announced the approaching storm, literature, as though its work of agitation had been accomplished, took up the shepherd's reed for public amusement. "Posterity will scarcely believe," says an eminent historian, "that *Paul and Virginia*, and the *Indian*



*Cottage*, were composed at this juncture by BERNARDIN DE ST. PIERRE; as also the *Fables* of FLORIAN, which are the only ones that have ever been considered readable since those by La Fontaine."

About the same time appeared *Le Voyage d'Anacharsis*, in which the Abbé BARTHELEMY embodied his erudition in an attractive form, presenting a living picture of ancient Greece in the time of Pericles.

A number of other writers appeared, less strange to the general spirit that was abroad. One of the most virtuous of these was M. NECKER, the financial minister of Louis XVI., who not only again and again stemmed the tide of ruin that was rushing upon the nation, but maintained the cause of religion against the torrent of public opinion in works distinguished by delicacy and elevation, seriousness and gentleness. We allude particularly to his *Cours de Morale Religieuse*. The final withdrawal of this worthy man from the administration of the finances was the too certain indication that the affairs of the government were irretrievable.

When the storm at length burst, the country was exposed to every kind of revolutionary tyranny—such is the consequence of insurrectionary enterprises, undertaken without any certain object, but merely for the satisfaction of a vague sentiment. It is not our intention to trace the steps of this fearful progress, except so far as it is intimately connected with the literature under review.

The first actors in the work of destruction were, for the most part, actuated by good intentions and a sincere desire for the public weal, however misled by illusory notions. The élite of the nation collected from all quarters of its territory to discuss the dearest of its interests, doubtless brought all their best talents to their work, and knew no better than to labor for the establishment of theories, instead of studying their

practical application. But these men were soon superseded by a new set of politicians—men of a lower class, envious of all distinctions of rank, and deeply imbued with the principles of the philosophers whose works we have referred to in the preceding pages. Some were full of Rousseau, and derived from his writings a hatred of everything above them; others had taken from Mably his admiration of the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, and would have reproduced their forms in modern France; others had borrowed from Raynal the revolutionary torch which he had lighted for the destruction of all institutions; others, educated in the atheistic fanaticism of Diderot, trembled with rage at the very name of priest or religion; and some of these theorists would coolly try, at least, the working of their opinions, whatever the experiment might cost. After their time of power, the Revolution had little moral relation to the history of opinions; it was handed over to the guidance of passion and personal interest.

In hurrying past these years of anarchy and bloodshed, we cast a passing glance on a poet, ANDRE CHENIER, who dared to write in the *Journal de Paris* against the excesses of his countrymen; in consequence of which he was cited before the revolutionary tribunal, condemned, and executed (1794). In the prison from which he was led to death, he composed the following:—

## IAMBES.

Quand au mouton bëlant la sombre boucherie  
 Ouvre ses cavernes de mort,  
 Pauvres chiens et moutons, toute la bergerie  
 Ne s'informe plus de son sort.  
 Les enfants qui suivaient ses ébats dans la plaine,  
 Les vierges aux belles couleurs  
 Qui le baisaient en foule, et sur sa blanche laine  
 Entrelaçaient rubans et fleurs,  
 Sans plus penser à lui le mangent s'il est tendre.  
 Dans cet abîme enseveli,

J'ai le même destin. Je m'y devais attendre.  
 Accoutumons-nous à l'oubli.  
 Oubliés comme moi dans cet affreux repaire,  
 Mille autres moutons comme moi,  
 Pendus au croc sanglant du charnier populaire,  
 Seront servis au peuple-roi.  
 Que pouvaient mes amis? Oui, de leur main chérie  
 Un mot à travers ces barreaux  
 A versé quelque baume en mon âme flétrie,  
 De l'or peut-être à mes bourreaux.  
 Mais tout est précipice. Ils ont eu droit de vivre.  
 Vivez, amis; vivez contents.  
 En dépit de Bavus soyez lents à me suivre.  
 Peut-être en de plus heureux temps  
 J'ai moi-même, à l'aspect des pleurs de l'infortune,  
 Détourné mes regards distraits;  
 A mon tour aujourd'hui mon malheur importune;  
 Vivez, amis; vivez en paix.

## LA JEUNE CAPTIVE.

L'épi naissant mûrit de la faux respecté;  
 Sans crainte du pressoir le pampre tout l'été  
 Boit les doux présents de l'Aurore;  
 Et moi, comme lui belle, et jeune comme lui,  
 Quoi que l'heure présente ait de trouble et d'ennui,  
 Je ne veux point mourir encore.  
  
 Qu'un stoïque aux yeux secs vole embrasser la Mort;  
 Moi je pleure et j'espère. Au noir souffle du nord  
 Je plie et relève ma tête.  
 S'il est des jours amers, il en est de si doux!  
 Hélas! quel miel jamais n'a laissé de dégoûts?  
 Quelle mer n'a point de tempête?  
  
 L'illusion féconde habite dans mon sein.  
 D'une prison sur moi les murs pèsent en vain,  
 J'ai les ailes de l'Espérance.  
 Echappée aux réseaux de l'oiseleur cruel,  
 Plus vive, plus heureuse, aux campagnes du ciel  
 Philomèle chante et s'élance.

Est-ce à moi de mourir ? Tranquille je m'endors,  
 Et tranquille je veille ; et ma veille aux remords  
     Ni mon sommeil ne sont en proie.  
 Ma bienvenue au jour me rit dans tous les yeux ;  
 Sur des fronts abattus mon aspect dans ces lieux  
     Ranime presque de la joie.

Mon beau voyage encore est si loin de sa fin !  
 Je pars, et des ormeaux qui bordent le chemin  
     J'ai passé les premiers à peine.  
 Au banquet de la vie à peine commencé,  
 Un instant seulement mes lèvres ont pressé  
     La coupe en mes mains encor pleine.

Je ne suis qu'au printemps ; je veux voir la moisson,  
 Et, comme le soleil, de saison en saison  
     Je veux achever mon année.  
 Brillante sur ma tige et l'honneur du jardin,  
 Je n'ai vu luire encor que les feux du matin ;  
     Je veux achever ma journée.

O Mort ! tu peux attendre ; éloigne, éloigne-toi ;  
 Va consoler les cœurs que la honte, l'effroi,  
     Le pâle désespoir dévore :  
 Pour moi Palès encore a des asiles verts,  
 Les Amours, des baisers ; les Muses, des concerts :  
     Je ne veux point mourir encore.

—Ainsi, triste et captif, ma lyre toutefois  
 S'éveillait, écoutant ces plaintes, cette voix,  
     Ces vœux d'une jeune captive ;  
 Et secouant le faix de mes jours languissants,  
 Aux douces lois des vers je pliais les accents  
     De sa bouche aimable et naïve.

Ces chants, de ma prison témoins harmonieux,  
 Feront à quelque amant des loisirs studieux  
     Chercher quelle fut cette belle.  
 La grâce décorait son front et ses discours :  
 Et, comme elle, craindront de voir finir leurs jours  
     Ceux qui les passeront près d'elle.



## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

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### XXII.—RISE OF THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

MADAME DE STAEL—MADAME DE GENLIS—M. LE VICOMTE DE CHATEAUBRIAND.

WHEN Napoleon found himself firmly seated on the throne of the Empire, he gave abundant encouragement to the arts, but little or none to literature. His reign is characterized by the fact, that books were little in request; old editions of the best authors were sold for a mere fraction of their original price; but new works were dear, because the demand for them was so limited, that publishers durst not print a large number of copies.

When literature ventured to lift up its head again, it appeared that a new order of thought had been generated in the chaos of events. In vain the *Journal des Débats* undertook to lead the taste of the nation back to the ancient classics, and the French models of the seventeenth century; the feelings of the people were all for the freer forms of other modern literatures introduced to their acquaintance by Madame de Staël and M. Châteaubriand. The powerful impress left by these two authors requires that we introduce them more particularly.

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MADAME DE STAEL,\* whom the general voice has pro-

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\* See Mrs. Child's *Madame de Staël*, New York, 1847.  
(378)

nounced the greatest of all female authors, was the only daughter of the celebrated financier Necker, and born in Paris in 1766. Though possessing an exuberance of childish buoyancy, she seems never to have been a child in intellect. She was early introduced to the society of the cleverest men in Paris, with whom her father's house was a favorite resort; and before she was twelve years of age, such men as Raynal, Grimm, and Marmontel, used to converse with her as though she had been twenty, either sparring with her to elicit her ready eloquence, or inquiring into her studies, and recommending new books. She thus early imbibed a taste for society and distinction, for interchanging ideas with intelligent men, and bearing her part in the brilliant conversation of the *salon*. Her mind was familiar from childhood with notions of success in society, and of literary reputation; and it is little wonder they became necessary to her as daily food in after-life.

Her mother, a pedantic disciplinarian, began by cramming her with learning to the injury of her health, so that at the age of fourteen she was obliged to forego serious study for a time, and had leave to surrender herself to the pleasures of imagination. Being sent into the country, in company with a congenial young friend, she amused herself with writing pastoral dramas, and acting them. As she grew up, her affection for her father, her admiration of his talents and virtues, with an enthusiastic appreciation of his importance to his country, in connexion with literary ambition on her own account, became the strongest passions of her life, and probably gave her mind that bent towards politics which afterwards distinguished her. "Oh! nothing," she wrote on one occasion, "can equal the emotion that a woman feels when she hears the name of one beloved repeated by a whole people. All those faces which appear for the time animated by the same feeling as one's own; those innumerable voices which echo to the heart the name that rises in the air, and which appears to return from heaven

after having received the homage of earth ; the inconceivable electric sympathy which runs from man to man when all share the same emotions, all those mysteries of nature and social feeling are added to the greatest mystery of all—love ; and the soul sinks under emotions altogether overmastering. When I came to myself, I felt that I had reached the extreme boundary of happiness.”

When Mademoiselle Necker was scarcely sixteen, she wrote her father a long anonymous letter on his *Compte Rendu*, a statement of the past and present condition of the public finances—the first work of the kind which had ever appeared in France, and which naturally elicited a good deal of discussion. The father recognised the style, and appreciated at once the talent and the filial affection of his daughter. They became more attached than ever.

At the age of twenty, Mademoiselle Necker gave her hand to the Baron de Staël, the Swedish ambassador at Paris ; not, it would seem, with a view of enjoying friendship, or companionship, to say nothing of love, but to gain a convenient position for the exercise of her talents, and the enjoyment of society. She now appeared at court, and about the same time made her début in literature by publishing her letters on Rousseau's works. After the fashion in which friends used to write about friends at that time, we have the following portrait of Madame de Staël soon after her marriage :—“Zulma advances ; her large dark eyes sparkle with genius ; her hair, black as ebony, falls on her shoulders in waving ringlets ; her features are more marked than delicate, and express something superior to the destiny of her sex. Every one cried, ‘La voilà !’ when she appeared, and there was breathless silence. When she sang, she extemporized the words of her song ; her face kindled with more than natural ardor ; she held the audience in serious attention, at once astonished and delighted, and not knowing which most to admire—the facility or the

perfection of the performance. After the music, she spoke of the great truths of nature, the immortality of the soul, the love of liberty, the allurements and dangers of the passions: her features, meanwhile, assuming an expression superior to beauty; her countenance continually varying, her voice exhibiting a thousand modulations, and a perfect harmony appearing between her thoughts and their expression. Even if her words were not heard, her meaning might have been gathered from her look, her gestures, and the inflections of her voice. When she ceased, a murmur of approbation ran round the room; she looked down modestly, her long eyelashes covered her flashing eyes, and the sun was overcast!"

Thus brilliantly and joyously did Madame de Staël launch into life. No marvel that when public events, already a swelling stream, became a tempestuous flood that wrecked her fondest hopes, and consigned her to a quiet retirement, she found it not a haven of repose and enjoyment, but a dead sea in which she could only struggle in despondency.

The enthusiastic, sanguine, and imaginative mind of Madame de Staël was captivated by the promising harbingers of liberty, the first dawnings of the French Revolution, when nothing was sought but exemption from oppression, and none of the subsequent excesses were foreseen. She witnessed nearly all its important events: she was present when the furious multitude forced the palace of Versailles, and brought the royal family to Paris; she heard the forty-eight tocsins of Paris sound the alarm on the fatal 9th of August, and continue all night their monotonous and lugubrious tolling, while no one knew what the morrow would bring forth; and when the scene of tumult and bloodshed began, she scarcely escaped the dreadful carnage, and obtained leave to pass in safety and join her parents in Switzerland. Ardently as she had embraced the revolutionary cause, she was not blind to the change which it underwent, nor did she stubbornly adhere to it in its altered character. She not only abhorred, but courageously opposed the course



which France was running towards regicide ; she drew up a written plan for the monarch's escape from the Tuileries—but it was never communicated to him ; and she heroically incurred a still greater risk in publishing a defence of the queen at the commencement of the Reign of Terror. After the fall of the terrorists, Madame de Staël wished to return to Paris. She loved French society, hated Genevese preciseness, and hoped to assist in the re-establishment of order. Her arrival in the capital (1795) was regarded as an epoch in public affairs. Passionately loving *éclat*, and eager to bear a part in the busy scenes of life, she made her house the rendezvous of all parties, and sought her own distinction in endeavoring to reconcile them all, and to diffuse a spirit of mutual toleration. Her exertions in this respect were not without risk ; but she looked upon danger as a crown of laurel, and, as far as she was personally concerned, preferred the excitement of struggle to the repose of success. Her drawing-rooms became the resort of distinguished foreigners, ambassadors, and authors ; and herself a centre of a political society. She lent the aid of her talents in support of the Directory, being comparatively easy about the materials of the new government, if it would only prevent a recurrence of anarchy and bloodshed. But the people were eyeing with delight the brilliant spectacle of foreign conquests, under the direction of Bonaparte ; and the weakness and unpopularity of the Directory became the stepping-stone for the military domination which he succeeded in establishing at home.

Madame de Staël and Bonaparte early evinced a thorough dislike of each other ; she saw the anti-liberal tendency of his mind, the inherent germ of despotism, and refused to be dazzled by those achievements which had turned the heads of her countrymen. On the other hand, Bonaparte regarded her as an unwelcome phenomenon ; his aversion probably being composed of jealousy of the admiration which her talents

created, with his preconceived contempt for the intellect of her sex. The hostility which originated in prejudice was steadily continued. A woman of her calibre was unmanageable ; a man of eminent talents might be put into office and rendered subservient to his policy ; but Napoleon could offer her no boon which would induce her to forego the liberty of free discussion. She carried the double shield of strength and weakness, availing herself of the privileges which European chivalry extends to a lady, while wielding the powerful weapons of a masculine understanding. To save himself from the terrors of her tongue, Bonaparte banished her from Paris. He next directed his vengeance against her works ; and it has been said that the annals of literary persecution contain nothing more extraordinary than that to which Madame de Staël's writings were exposed by his watchful tyranny. Though her work on Germany was almost wholly literary, to the exclusion of politics, it was submitted to the censors, in obedience to a decree against the liberty of the press. They authorized its publication, but demanded the erasure of several passages, which were considered to be anti-despotic in their tendency. The exceptionable passages having been expunged, 10,000 copies were printed ; but gendarmes were sent to seize the impressions ; the print was obliterated by a chemical process, and the restoration of the blank paper was the only indemnification afforded to the publisher. The manuscript was demanded ; the authoress ordered to quit France in twenty-four hours ; and before all was over, she was forbidden to stir more than ten leagues in any direction from her house at Coppet. M. de Staël, who had been recalled to Sweden in 1799, died three years afterwards at this retreat, attended by his lady, to whom he had just been reconciled after some years of separation.

In 1810, a young Spaniard of the name of Rocca, an officer in the French army, visited Geneva in a state of great weakness, and suffering from wounds received in Spain. He was

seized with an enthusiastic admiration for Madame de Staël, though she was twenty years older than himself, and he induced her to marry him; but she never acknowledged the tie, or consented to change her name. Her situation becoming disconsolate and irksome in consequence of her being precluded even from receiving visits at Coppet, through the tyranny of Bonaparte, she escaped by secret flight into Russia, and thence passed through Sweden into England. Here she was courted by the most distinguished society, and effected the publication of her *Germany*.

The abdication of Napoleon in 1814 enabled her to return to the continent, but she retreated to Coppet as soon as he reappeared in Paris after his temporary residence at Elba. He now invited her to repair to the capital, in order to assist him in modelling a constitution; but she replied: "He did without either me or a constitution for twelve years, and has no liking for either of us." However pleased with his final overthrow, her patriotism was deeply wounded by the allies entering *La Belle France*; and she again retired to Coppet, to avoid witnessing the humiliating spectacle. Here she was visited in 1816 by Lord Byron, whose acquaintance she had made in England, and to whom she now addressed some lessons of worldly wisdom, especially with reference to his lady. When he quoted to her in reply a motto of her own, that "a man ought to be able to brave public opinion, but a woman to submit to it"—she replied, that she feared both sexes would reap only evil from resistance.

Madame de Staël's character softened as she advanced in years. Domestic affection, which was amply gratified in her husband and children, gradually supplanted the love of public activity and distinction, while religion lent its support as her health declined. She wasted gradually away, and died at Paris in 1817, in her fifty-second year. Rocca, whose chival-

rous attachment to her had continued in all its vigor, survived her but a few months.

Madame de Staël, like other authors of that age, wrote on a great variety of subjects. Her *Dix Années d'Exile* is the most simple and interesting of her works. Her *Considérations de la Révolution Française*, which was not published till after her death, is considered the most valuable of her political pieces, from its affording a description of the personal impressions made by that convulsion; but the great preponderance of praise which she gives to her father (Necker), takes much from its impartiality. Among her works of fiction, *Delphine* and *Corinne* have had the highest popularity; but, however admirable for subtle remark, vivid detail, and, above all, for singular power in the delineation of character, they are objectionable in a moral point of view, and her minor tales are still more faulty in this respect. Of all her works, *L'Allemagne* is considered worthy of the highest rank, and is that which was calculated most beneficially to influence the literature of her country. It is a treatise on the spirit, manners, and literature of the Germans, a nation previously little appreciated in France, but with which this authoress made a personal acquaintance during the years of her exile. As a literary critic, she extended her views to the essentials of excellence, disdaining the narrow-mindedness which makes criticism to consist in the detection of minute blemishes, and rising above that attention to mere forms which had always been the bane of this department of French authorship. There was perhaps no other country the picture of whose literature was calculated to be so useful to France; and that, not because it afforded the best models for it to follow, but because it was so unlike French literature in its general characteristics, that the display of its riches tended to convey to a narrow-minded community a better idea of the extensive range which literature might embrace, than that of a country more congenial with their



own could possibly have done. She thus encouraged the abandonment of the models to which the taste of France still adhered, despite the shock of its political revolution. She taught her countrymen to blush for the pedantic exclusiveness with which they had circumscribed themselves; and her writings have perhaps, beyond all others, vanquished and subdued the derisive spirit of depreciating illiberality, which had tended to cripple genius more than to repel the encroachments of bad taste. She promoted enthusiasm to the place hitherto occupied by fastidiousness, and aided the man of genius in daring to be himself. Writers like Delavigne, Lamartine, Béranger, De Vigny, and Victor Hugo, though in no respect imitators of Madame de Staël, are probably much indebted to her for the stimulus to originality which her writings afforded.

It is to be remarked, at the same time, that while Madame de Staël was liberal and enlightened, she was not wholly dispassionate, and in her abhorrence of trivial criticism she sometimes indulged in sweeping assertions, and broad classifications in defiance of facts. It must also be admitted, that too many rank and noxious weeds, as well as fair flowers and wholesome fruits, have resulted from her endeavors to fertilize the literary soil of her country; that the demand for novelty and excitement has been carried to a vicious extreme; and that the literary freedom which this lady promoted has degenerated into licentiousness. This we shall presently have occasion to notice in *La Littérature Extravagante*.

Madame de Staël was one of those great poets who are poetical only in prose. The mechanical difficulties of versification fettered her imagination, and in none of her professedly poetical compositions does she rise above mediocrity. But her prose writings abound with poetic ornaments of the most brilliant kind. *Corinne*, for instance, presents perhaps a greater abundance of examples of poetry in prose than any other single

work in the language. We have such a passage in the improvisation of *Corinne* in the Capitol. This Corinne, the most celebrated woman in Italy, was to be crowned, and according to the usage she must extemporize or recite some verses before she received on her head the destined laurels. "She asks for her lyre," tells the story, "which she prefers as resembling the harp, but being more antique in its form, and more simple in its music. And now, in a trembling voice, she inquires what her subject must be. 'The glory and the happiness of Italy!' was the unanimous response. 'Well, yes,' replied she, already kindling with the subject—'the glory and the happiness of Italy;' and after this manner she sang in verses of which prose can afford but an imperfect idea :

"Italie, empire du soleil! Italie, maîtresse du monde! Italie, berceau des lettres, je te salue. Combien de fois la race humaine te fut soumise, tributaire de tes armes, de tes beaux-arts et de ton ciel!

Un dieu quitta l'Olympe pour se réfugier en Ausonie; l'aspect de ce pays fit rêver les vertus de l'âge d'or, et l'homme y parut trop heureux pour l'y supposer coupable.

Rome conquit l'univers par son génie, et fut reine par la liberté. Le caractère romain s'imprima sur le monde, et l'invasion des barbares, en détruisant l'Italie, obscurcit l'univers entier.

L'Italie reparut avec les divins trésors que les Grecs fugitifs rapportèrent dans son sein; le ciel lui révéla ses lois; l'audace de ses enfants découvrit un nouvel hémisphère: elle fut reine encore par le sceptre de la pensée, mais ce sceptre de lauriers ne fit que des ingrats.

L'imagination lui rendit l'univers qu'elle avait perdu. Les peintres, les poètes, enfantèrent pour elle une terre, un Olympe, des enfers et des cieux; et le feu qui l'anime, mieux gardé par son génie que par le dieu des païens, ne trouva point dans l'Europe un Prométhée qui le ravit.

Pourquoi suis-je au Capitole? pourquoi mon humble front va-t-il recevoir la couronne que Pétrarque a portée, et qui reste suspendue au cyprès funèbre du Tasse? pourquoi . . . si vous n'aimiez assez la gloire, ô mes concitoyens! pour récompenser son culte autant que ses succès?

Eh bien, si vous l'aimez, cette gloire qui choisit trop souvent ses victimes parmi les vainqueurs qu'elle a couronnés, pensez avec orgueil à ces siècles qui virent la renaissance des arts ! Le Dante, l'Homère des temps modernes, poète sacré de nos mystères religieux, héros de la pensée, plongea son génie dans le Styx pour aborder à l'enfer, et son âme fut profonde comme les abîmes qu'il a décrits.

L'Italie, au temps de sa puissance, revit tout entière dans le Dante. Animé par l'esprit des républiques, guerrier aussi bien que poète, il souffle la flamme des actions parmi les morts, et ses ombres ont une vie plus forte que les vivants d'aujourd'hui.

Les souvenirs de la terre les poursuivent encore ; leurs passions sans but s'acharnent à leur cœur ; elles s'agitent sur le passé, qui leur semble encore moins irrévocable que leur éternel avenir.

On dirait que le Dante, banni de son pays, a transporté dans les régions imaginaires les peines qui le dévoraient. Ses ombres demandent sans cesse des nouvelles de l'existence, comme le poète lui-même s'informe de sa patrie, et l'enfer s'offre à lui sous les couleurs de l'exil.

Tout, à ses yeux, se revêt du costume de Florence. Les morts qu'il évoque semblent renaître aussi Toscans que lui ; ce ne sont point les bornes de son esprit, c'est la force de son âme qui fait entrer l'univers dans le cercle de sa pensée.

Un enchaînement mystique de cercles et de sphères le conduit de l'enfer au purgatoire, du purgatoire au paradis ; historien fidèle de sa vision, il inonde de clarté les régions les plus obscures, et le monde qu'il crée dans son triple poème est complet, animé, brillant comme une planète nouvelle, aperçue dans le firmament.

A sa voix, tout sur la terre se change en poésie : les objets, les idées, les lois, les phénomènes, semblent un nouvel Olympe, de nouvelles divinités ; mais cette mythologie de l'imagination s'anéantit comme le paganisme à l'aspect du paradis, de cet océan de lumière, étincelant de rayons et d'étoiles, de vertus et d'amour.

Les magiques paroles de notre plus grand poète sont le prisme de l'univers ; toutes ses merveilles s'y réfléchissent, s'y divisent, s'y recomposent ; les sons imitent les couleurs, les couleurs se fondent en harmonie ; la rime, sonore ou bizarre, rapide ou prolongée, est inspirée par cette divination poétique, beauté suprême de l'art, triomphe du génie, qui découvre dans la nature tous les secrets en relation avec le cœur de l'homme.

Le Dante espérait de son poëme la fin de son exil ; il comptait sur la renommée pour médiatrice ; mais il mourut trop tôt pour recueillir les palmes de la patrie. Souvent la vie passagère de l'homme s'use dans les revers ; et si la gloire triomphe, si l'on aborde enfin sur une plage plus heureuse, la tombe s'ouvre derrière le port, et le destin à mille formes annonce souvent la fin de la vie par le retour du bonheur.

Ainsi le Tasse infortuné, que vos hommages, Romains, devaient consoler de tant d'injustices, beau, sensible, chevaleresque, rêvant les exploits, éprouvant l'amour qu'il chantait, s'approcha de ces murs, comme ses héros de Jérusalem, avec respect et reconnaissance. Mais la veille du jour choisi pour le couronner, la mort l'a réclamé pour sa terrible fête : le ciel est jaloux de la terre, et rappelle ses favoris des rives trompeuses du temps.

Dans un siècle plus fier et plus libre que celui du Tasse, Pétrarque fut aussi, comme le Dante, le poëte valeureux de l'indépendance italienne. Ailleurs on ne connaît de lui que ses amours ; ici des souvenirs plus sévères honorent à jamais son nom ; et la patrie l'inspira mieux que Laure elle-même.

Il ranima l'antiquité par ses veilles, et, loin que son imagination mît obstacle aux études les plus profondes, cette puissance créatrice, en lui soumettant l'avenir, lui révéla les secrets des siècles passés. Il éprouva que connaître sert beaucoup pour inventer, et son génie fut d'autant plus original, que, semblable aux forces éternelles, il fut présent à tous les temps.

Notre air serein, notre climat riant, ont inspiré l'Arioste. C'est l'arc-en-ciel qui parut après nos longues guerres : brillant et varié comme ce messager du beau temps, il semble se jouer familièrement avec la vie, et sa gaieté légère et douce est le sourire de la nature, et non pas l'ironie de l'homme.

Michel-Ange, Raphaël, Pergolèse, Galilée, et vous, intrépides voyageurs avides de nouvelles contrées, bien que leur nature ne pût vous offrir rien de plus beau que la vôtre, joignez aussi votre gloire à celle des poëtes ! Artistes, savants, philosophes, vous êtes comme eux enfants de ce soleil qui, tour à tour, développe l'imagination, anime la pensée, excite le courage, endort dans le bonheur, et semble tout promettre ou tout faire oublier.

Connaissez-vous cette terre où les orangers fleurissent, que les rayons des cieux fécondent avec amour ? Avez-vous entendu les sons



mélodieux qui célèbrent la douceur des nuits ? Avez-vous respiré ces parfums, luxe de l'air déjà si pur et si doux ? Répondez, étrangers ! la nature est-elle chez vous belle et bienfaisante ?

Ailleurs, quand les calamités sociales affligent un pays, les peuples doivent s'y croire abandonnés par la Divinité ; mais ici nous sentons toujours la protection du ciel, nous voyons qu'il s'intéresse à l'homme, et qu'il a daigné le traiter comme une noble créature.

Ce n'est pas seulement de pampres et d'épis que notre nature est parée ; mais elle prodigue sous les pas de l'homme, comme à la fête d'un souverain, une abondance de fleurs et de plantes inutiles, qui, destinées à plaire, ne s'abaissent point à servir.

Les plaisirs délicats, soignés par la nature, sont goûtés par une nation digne de les sentir ; les mets les plus simples lui suffisent ; elle ne s'enivre point aux fontaines de vin que l'abondance lui prépare : elle aime son soleil, ses beaux-arts, ses monuments, sa contrée tout à la fois antique et printanière ; les plaisirs raffinés d'une société brillante, les plaisirs grossiers d'un peuple avide, ne sont pas faits pour elle.

Ici, les sensations se confondent avec les idées, la vie se puise tout entière à la même source, et l'âme, comme l'air, occupe les confins de la terre et du ciel. Ici le génie se sent à l'aise parce que la rêverie y est douce ; s'il agite, elle calme ; s'il regrette un but, elle lui fait don de mille chimères ; si les hommes l'oppriment, la nature est là pour l'accueillir.

Ainsi toujours elle répare, et sa main secourable guérit toutes les blessures. Ici l'on se console des peines même du cœur, en admirant un Dieu de bonté, en pénétrant le secret de son amour ; les revers passagers de notre vie éphémère se perdent dans le sein fécond et majestueux de l'immortel univers.

Corinne fut interrompue pendant quelques moments par les applaudissements les plus impétueux. Le seul Oswald ne se mêla point aux transports bruyants qui l'entouraient. Il avait penché sa tête sur sa main, lorsque Corinne avait dit : *Ici l'on se console des peines même du cœur* ; et depuis lors il ne l'avait point relevée. Corinne le remarqua, et bientôt à ses traits, à la couleur de ses cheveux, à son costume, à sa taille élevée, à toutes ses manières enfin, elle le reconnut pour un Anglais. Le deuil qu'il portait et sa physionomie pleine de tristesse la frappèrent. Son regard, alors attaché sur elle, semblait lui faire doucement des reproches ; elle devina les pensées qui l'occu-

paient, et se sentit le besoin de le satisfaire, en parlant du bonheur avec moins d'assurance, en consacrant à la mort quelques vers au milieu d'une fête. Elle reprit donc sa lyre dans ce dessein, fit rentrer dans le silence toute l'assemblée par les sons touchants et prolongés qu'elle tira de son instrument, et recommença ainsi :

‘ Il est des peines cependant que notre ciel consolateur ne saurait effacer ; mais dans quel séjour les regrets peuvent-ils porter à l'âme une impression plus douce et plus noble que dans ces lieux ?

Ailleurs, les vivants trouvent à peine assez de place pour leurs rapides courses et leurs ardents désirs ; ici, les ruines, les déserts, les palais inhabités, laissent aux ombres un vaste espace. Rome maintenant n'est-elle pas la patrie des tombeaux ?

Le Colisée, les obélisques, toutes les merveilles qui, du fond de l'Egypte et de la Grèce, de l'extrémité des siècles, depuis Romulus jusqu'à Léon X., se sont réunies ici, comme si la grandeur attirait la grandeur, et qu'un même lieu dût renfermer tout ce que l'homme a pu mettre à l'abri du temps ; toutes ces merveilles sont consacrées aux monuments funèbres ; notre indolente vie est à peine aperçue ; le silence des vivants est un hommage pour les morts : ils durent, et nous passons.

Eux seuls sont honorés, eux seuls sont encore célèbres ; nos destinées obscures relèvent l'éclat de nos ancêtres ; notre existence actuelle ne laisse debout que le passé ; il ne se fait aucun bruit autour des souvenirs. Tous nos chefs-d'œuvre sont l'ouvrage de ceux qui ne sont plus, et le génie lui-même est compté parmi les illustres morts.

Peut-être un des charmes de Rome est-il de réconcilier l'imagination avec le long sommeil. On s'y résigne pour soi, l'on en souffre moins pour ce qu'on aime. Les peuples du Midi se représentent la fin de la vie sous des couleurs moins sombres que les habitants du Nord. Le soleil, comme la gloire, réchauffe même la tombe.

Le froid et l'isolement du sépulcre sous ce beau ciel, à côté de tant d'urnes funéraires, poursuivent moins les esprits effrayés ; on se croit attendu par la foule des ombres ; et, de notre ville solitaire à la ville souterraine, la transition semble assez douce.

Ainsi la pointe de la douleur semble émoussée ; non que le cœur soit blasé, non que l'âme soit aride ; mais une harmonie plus parfaite, un air plus odoriférant, se mêlent à l'existence. On s'abandonne à la nature avec moins de crainte, à cette nature dont le Créateur a

dit: Les lis ne travaillent ni ne filent; et cependant quels vêtements des rois pourraient égaler la magnificence dont j'ai revêtu ces fleurs?"

Another female author—not, indeed, worthy of comparison with Madame de Staël in respect of talent, but who lived, like her, through the Revolution, and exercised an influence on public events—was MADAME DE GENLIS (1746–1830), a lady of poor but noble family, and niece to Madame de Montesson, whom the Duke of Orleans had privately married. Through the influence of her aunt, this lady obtained the appointment of maid of honor to the Duchess de Chartres, and afterwards of governess to her children, of whom one, it will be recollected, was the late Louis-Philippe.

The political power of this lady did not depend on her pen, but on her private influence in the Orleans family, which she used against the Bourbons. She was, consequently, forced to emigrate in 1792; found favor under Napoleon; but sunk into obscurity again at the restoration of the Bourbon family, though saved from want by a pension from the house of Orleans. Her works, which extend to at least eighty volumes, are chiefly educational treatises, moral tales, and historical romances, furnishing what was certainly a desideratum in those days—a supply of safe reading, in a moral point of view, for young people.

M. LE VICOMTE DE CHATEAUBRIAND must be placed side by side with Madame de Staël, as another of those brilliant and versatile geniuses who have dazzled the eyes of their countrymen, and exerted a permanent influence on French literature. In each of his capacities as minister, diplomatist, orator, poet, traveller, theologian, novelist, journalist, pamphleteer, he engaged attention, and frequently commanded admiration; in all there was a combination of unity with variety; in all he was the same rash, ardent, imaginative, and eloquent Château-

briand. He was born in 1769, the youngest of ten children; passed his childhood amidst the woods that surrounded his paternal mansion; was well instructed in theology, with a view to his becoming an ecclesiastic; but entered the army at an early age, as he manifested no predilection for the sacred vocation. He quitted the service, however, at the commencement of the French Revolution; and after indulging somewhat in pastoral poetry, passed over to America, in whose civilized communities he hoped to find the liberty for which his countrymen were panting, and in whose boundless forests, a verification of those rhapsodies of Rousseau which had taken a powerful hold of his youthful imagination. He returned on hearing of the arrest of Louis XVI. at Varennes, and chivalrously determined to devote himself to the royal cause. But the struggle was hopeless; and after being wounded at Thionville, he fled to England, where he remained several years. In 1801, he returned to France, determined to raise a literary monument to the faith which had consoled him during the reverses of his life.

The terrors of the French Revolution, the disastrous extravagances which had accompanied that worst of all fanaticisms—the bigotry of infidelity—had produced a strong reaction on the more refined and imaginative circles of France. Never, perhaps, were the consolations arising from a belief in a future state so ardently longed for as among the generation that survived the Reign of Terror. The guillotine, the wars, the conscriptions, had left few without some to mourn, and the hope of a better world indicated a greater blessing than any that earth could afford; but deism kept its stronghold among the leading intellects of the day, and no one dared to advocate what every one wished. At this juncture, Châteaubriand stepped forward, an author whose talents no critic could call in question, and whose eloquence all men could understand, to cherish these “longings after immortality,” and to verify the



saying, that when the many desire a leader, the voice of Heaven sometimes directs them to a poet. Before publishing the *Génie du Christianisme*, he sent forth several religious novels, of which the most celebrated is *Atala*, to which he prefixed a recital of the circumstances which had led himself to seek peace of mind in the Christian faith. He made his appeal, not to the wisdom of the savans, but to the feelings of an excitable people; he did not argue the evidences of Christianity, but he rushed in a tide of passion and poetry into hearts ready to receive him, and into these bleeding hearts he carried the consolations of Christianity. “Je n’ai point cédé,” he says, “à de grandes lumières surnaturelles, ma conviction est sorti du cœur—j’ai pleuré, et j’ai cru.” The popular feeling echoed the egotism; the people too, had wept, and were therefore willing to believe.

Madame de Staël, who had many qualities in common with Châteaubriand, had also a strong poetic feeling of religion; but her writings only implied and hoped what Châteaubriand asserted and promised. It was by advancing one step further than she had done, that he gained the heart of the French nation.

*Atala* elicited a burst of astonishment and admiration, and seldom has public sympathy arisen to the same degree of delirium. Innumerable editions and translations into different languages spread the fame of the author in a few months from Lisbon to St. Petersburg; the Greek read it on the Propylæa; and it is said even that the sultanas of the East wept over the misfortunes of the daughter of Simaghan in the solitude of the harems. This much lauded work is a short tale of simple structure, bearing, in common with *Réné* and *Les Natchez*, on savage life in the forests of North America. *Atala* is a Christian, the daughter of a European; she liberates the Indian, Chactas; flies with him, and labors with some success for his conversion. A mutual attachment springs up; but *Atala* has

taken a vow of celibacy; and not knowing that the Roman Catholic missionary has the power as well as the will, to procure her release, she swallows poison to end her miserable existence. The tale, it seems to us, defeats its own end. The priest's laudation of the virtue of celibacy does not tell so well in favor of it, as the unhappy consequence of the vow tells against it.

*Les Martyrs*, a prose epic on the theme of the sufferings of Christians in the reigns of Diocletian and Galerius, is considered the best of Châteaubriand's fictions; ill constructed as a story, but abounding in eloquent passages and fine displays of descriptive talent.

The *Génie du Christianisme* was the crowning work of a series in which the religious views of the author are prominent and pervading. It has been characterized as "a work of eminent eloquence and much research, yet one of the most unequal and unsatisfactory productions of genius that have been witnessed in modern times. Full of brilliant beauties and glaring defects—passages which all must admire, and errors that might be detected by a child—excellent in intention, yet so executed as to draw down the reprobation even of those who are most zealous in the cause the writer has undertaken to defend." The author thus announces the object he had in view. "It had been maintained," he says, "that Christianity was a religion sprung from barbarism, absurd in its doctrines, ridiculous in its ceremonies, and hostile to the progress of arts and literature." Accordingly, he undertakes to prove, that of all religions that have ever existed, Christianity is the most poetical, the most favorable to liberty, to the arts, and to literature; that the modern world owes everything to this religion, from agriculture to abstract science, from the humblest refuge of the unfortunate, to the temples embellished by Michael Angelo; that it fosters talent, purifies taste, and invigorates thought; that it supplies noble images

to the writer, and perfect models to the artist; and that it is desirable to summon all the enchantments of imagination, and all the interests of the heart, to aid that religion which they have hitherto been employed to oppose. The intention was certainly good; the author saw that both in literature and in the fine arts no models were recognised except those of Greece and Rome; and that this invariable use of classic symbols, and this incessant appeal to classical models among a people on whom outward forms have so great an influence, was tending to confirm them in the prevailing anti-Christian feeling. While deism was thus captivating its proselytes with the classic beauties of heathen fable, he strove to counteract the poison by displaying the beauties of Christian truth, hoping that if he did not convince their reason, at least he might captivate their tastes. It was by such means that he expected to silence the ablest opponents that ever directed the weapons of perverted reason against the evidences of religion; and it seems never to have occurred to him, that he was condescending to occupy very humble ground in the controversy, and that such a line of defence might be derogatory to the great cause he had undertaken to advocate. He seems never to have questioned whether it was advantageous to religion to treat it as if it were one of the fine arts. Nevertheless, the work succeeded to admiration; at least in securing readers. Six editions were printed in one year in France alone; and it is believed that, with all its weakness, as it appears to us, it really did prove the commencement of a religious reaction, which has continued under various forms, though not so extensively as could be desired, to the present day. Fain would we hope and believe that if this writer, or any other of equal power, had grasped the great truths of the Christian revelation, and displayed them in their saving and sanctifying influence, instead of spending the strength of his genius in the cause of monastic vows, prayers to saints, and such like,



there might have been a truly national return to this religious feeling, with a spirit of enlightened freedom. But, unfortunately, while in government, literature, and everything else, it had been deemed necessary to re-establish matters on a footing corresponding to the views of freedom which had taken possession of the public mind, no one seemed to think of any restoration of religion other than a return to the bonds which were so cheerfully worn in the seventeenth century.

The genius of M. Châteaubriand has unquestionably been very inaccurately estimated by those who measure the height of an author by the shadow of his celebrity. Some of his characteristics have doubtless produced a seriously injurious effect on French literature; and of these, one of the most contagious, and the most corrupting, is his passion for the glitter of words, and the pageantry of high-sounding phrases. His maxim was, that an "author survives only by style;" and accordingly, his own is in the highest degree artificial and theatrical. The expression always excites more attention than the thought; and even as the sculptors in the later days of Rome deteriorated in grace and vigor, in proportion as they lavished their attention upon the draperies rather than the figures, so M. Châteaubriand appears feeble in proportion as he labors to be effective. Nothing is more destructive to a quick intuition and a firm grasp of truth, than an overfastidious selection of phrases. But this influence on the reader is not the worst. In striving to say fine things, he often says false ones; anxious chiefly to astonish his readers, he is little scrupulous about the means, and is not seldom guilty of sacrificing a truth to a prettiness.

This author, however, is not to be blamed as a leader of the modern *Littérature Extravagante*. As we shall presently see, the exaggeration of the latter is that of character and passion, not of style and phrase; the vivid fancy and glowing declamation of Châteaubriand were never prostrated in the cause of



vice. Above all, he is always a gentlemen; and though often in the clouds, he is never in the mire. Yet he seems to be answerable for having set the fashion of stringing together declamations upon feeling and sentiment, instead of exhibiting the play of great passions; rendering subjects which ought to be gravely examined and deeply felt, the lay-figures for tawdry and ill-placed rhetoric. The false system which he commenced for virtuous objects has been pressed into the service of vice, by writers who have neither his heart nor his intellect.

Châteaubriand has no great merit as a literary critic. He is a very Frenchman in his estimate of the productions of other nations. "Si nous jugeons avec impartialité," says he, "les ouvrages étrangers et les nôtres, nous trouverons toujours une immense supériorité du côté de la littérature Française." And so he views with horror the progress of a taste for Shakspeare among his countrymen.

"Le penchant pour Shakspeare est bien plus dangereux en France qu'en Angleterre. Chez les Anglois il n'y a qu'ignorance, chez nous il y a dépravation. Celui qui aime la laideur n'est pas fort loin d'aimer le vice: quiconque est insensible à la beauté peut bien méconnoître la vertu. Le mauvais goût et le vice marchent presque toujours ensemble: le premier n'est que l'expression du second, comme la parole rend la pensée."

Few Englishmen will thank him for such strictures.

It has been remarked of his *History of English Literature*, that its plan is radically erroneous; but many of its episodes are admirable. Its faults are those of the whole; its beauties those of detail. His remarks on the characteristics of the middle ages, upon the intellectual calibre of Luther, upon the life and genius of Milton, and upon Mirabeau, contain passages of graphic conciseness which redeem a thousand faults. Even his egotisms are not unpleasing; he is a man whose account of himself posterity will not disdain to hear. He excels, too,

in local description, which constitutes a large part of the merit of his novels, and renders his travels agreeable in spite of their inaccuracy. The following picture of Jerusalem may be quoted as an example:—

Vue de la montagne des Oliviers, de l'autre côte de la vallée de Josaphat, Jérusalem présente un plan incliné sur un sol qui descend du couchant au levant. Une muraille crénelée, fortifiée par des tours et par un château gothique, enferme la ville dans son entier, laissant toutefois au dehors une partie de la montagne de Sion, qu'elle embrassait autrefois.

Dans la région du couchant et au centre de la ville, vers le Calvaire, les maisons se serrent d'assez près; mais au levant, le long de la vallée de Cédron, on aperçoit des espaces vides, entre autres l'enceinte qui règne autour de la mosquée bâtie sur les débris du Temple, et le terrain presque abandonné où s'élevaient le château Antonia et le second palais d'Hérode.

Les maisons de Jérusalem sont de lourdes masses carrées, fort basses, sans cheminées et sans fenêtres; elles se terminent en terrasses aplaties ou en dômes, et elles ressemblent à des prisons ou à des sépulcres. Tout seroit à l'œil d'un niveau égal, si les clochers des églises, les minarets des mosquées, les cîmes de quelques cyprès et les buissons de nopals ne rompaient l'uniformité du plan. A la vue de ces maisons de pierres, renfermées dans un paysage de pierres, on se demande si ce ne sont pas là les monuments confus d'un cimetière au milieu d'un désert?

Entrez dans la ville, rien ne vous consolera de la tristesse extérieure: vous vous égarez dans de petites rues non pavées, qui montent et descendent sur un sol inégal, et vous marchez dans des flots de poussière, ou parmi des cailloux roulants. Des toiles jetées d'une maison à l'autre augmentent l'obscurité de ce labyrinthe; des bazars voûtés et infects achèvent d'ôter la lumière à la ville désolée; quelques chétives boutiques n'étaient aux yeux que la misère; et souvent ces boutiques même sont fermées, dans la crainte du passage d'un cadî. Personne dans les rues, personne aux portes de la ville; quelquefois seulement un paysan se glisse dans l'ombre, cachant sous ses habits les fruits de son labeur, dans la crainte d'être dépouillé par le soldat; dans un coin à l'écart, le boucher arabe égorge quelque bête suspendue par les pieds à un mur en ruine: à l'air hagard et féroce

de cet homme, à ses bras ensanglantés, vous croiriez qu'il vient plutôt de tuer son semblable, que d'immoler un agneau. Pour tout bruit dans la cité déicide, on entend par intervalles le galop de la cavale du désert : c'est le janissaire qui apporte la tête du Bédouin, ou qui va piller le Fellah.

Here is a night-scene in the forests of America :—

Un soir je m'étais égaré dans une forêt, à quelque distance de la cataracte de Niagara ; bientôt je vis le jour s'éteindre autour de moi, et je goûtai, dans toute sa solitude, le beau spectacle d'une nuit dans les déserts du Nouveau-Monde.

Une heure après le coucher du soleil, la lune se montra au-dessus des arbres, à l'horizon opposé. Une brise embaumée, que cette reine des nuits amenait de l'orient avec elle, semblait la précéder dans les forêts comme sa fraîche haleine. L'astre solitaire monta peu à peu dans le ciel : tantôt il suivait paisiblement sa course azurée ; tantôt il reposait sur des groupes de nues qui ressemblaient à la cîme de hautes montagnes couronnés de neige. Ces nues, ployant et déployant leurs voiles, se déroulaient en zones diaphanes de satin blanc, se dispersaient en légers flocons d'écume, ou formaient dans les cieux des bancs d'une ouate éblouissante, si doux, à l'œil, qu'on croyait ressentir leur mollesse et leur élasticité.

La scène sur la terre n'était pas moins ravissante : le jour bleuâtre et velouté de la lune descendait dans les intervalles des arbres, et poussait des gerbes de lumière jusque dans l'épaisseur des plus profondes ténèbres. La rivière qui coulait à mes pieds, tour à tour se perdait dans le bois, tour à tour reparaissait brillante des constellations de la nuit, qu'elle répétait dans son sein. Dans une savane, de l'autre côté de la rivière, la clarté de la lune dormait sans mouvement sur les gazons : des bouleaux agités par les brises, et dispersés çà et là, formaient des îles d'ombres flottantes sur cette mer immobile de lumière. Auprès, tout aurait été silence et repos, sans la chute de quelques feuilles, le passage d'un vent subit, le gémissement de la hulotte ; au loin par intervalles, on entendait les sourds mugissement de la cataracte de Niagara, qui, dans le calme de la nuit, se prolongeaient de désert en désert, et expiraient à travers les forêts solitaires.

Napoleon was not slow to perceive the importance of attaching to his government a man who wielded so powerful an influ-

ence; and after the signature of the Concordat, Châteaubriand was appointed first-secretary of the French embassy to Rome. During his sojourn in Italy, he sent, in the shape of letters to M. de Fontanes, some rich contributions of anecdote and classic recollection, most of which appeared in the *Mercury of France*. Napoleon's assumption of the crown, and the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, decided Châteaubriand not to remain in his service; he sent in his resignation on the same day that he heard of the tragedy, and Napoleon had the wisdom not only to abstain from persecuting him, but to make new advances. They were rejected, however; and our author soon afterwards began that tour through Italy, Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land, which he afterwards so eloquently narrated. On his return to his native country, he ventured to become a journalist, notwithstanding the thralldom under which the press then labored; but some of his expressions having excited the displeasure of Napoleon, the work was suppressed. Meanwhile, he was growing in the estimation of French littérateurs, and a vacancy having occurred in the Institute by the death of Chénier, he was elected a member. But a condition attached to every election was a panegyric on the predecessor, and Chénier the revolutionist being an uncongenial subject to Châteaubriand, he reversed the disobedience of Balaam, produced an anathema instead of a eulogium, and consequently found his election annulled, and himself ordered to quit Paris. On the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814, he was appointed ambassador to Sweden, and continued at various intervals to fill official situations in the ministry or diplomacy down to the Revolution of 1830, when, vowing eternal fidelity to the elder branch of the Bourbon family, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to Louis-Philippe, and renounced his seat in the Chamber of Peers. The remainder of his life was chiefly occupied in literary labor; and he died in 1848, in the eightieth year of his age.



## XXIII.—A NEW CAREER.

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY—SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY—LITERARY CRITICISM  
—NEW FEATURES IN POETRY—NOVELS AND PLAYS.

SINCE the peace of 1814, all the great questions which agitate the human mind have been studied over again—religion, morality, theories of psychology, metaphysics, æsthetics, political economy, legislation, and government; yet, it must be confessed, with no very definite or satisfactory result. The general character of the literature which has prevailed during this period, is thus described in the *Edinburgh Review*, which we prefer quoting, to embodying any views of our own:—

“We perceive in the whole literature of the restoration, when we look back on it calmly, a literature of contention and indecision, an oscillation between two opinions, or an awkward and unsatisfying compromise between both. The same strife which in politics prevails between the partisans of things as they were, of things as they are, and of things as the sanguine and inexperienced think they should be, which in religion shows itself in the contests between the Jesuits, the moderate religious reformers, and those who, like the St. Simonians, are determined to have at once a new heaven as well as a new earth, indicates itself also in literature, in the combats of classicism and romanticism, the liberalism and legitimatism of thought, and in the *juste milieu* system which would blend these heterogeneous elements with each other. Now one appears to be in the ascendant, now the other; and as in the case of the rival popes, fulminating bulls against each other from Rome and Avignon, none knows where the successorship of St. Peter is truly vested: the principles of taste, nay, the foundations of morals from which those principles flow, are left to the arbitration of conflicting tribunals, each claiming

supreme authority, and reversing without ceremony the decisions of the other."

Under these circumstances, combined with the immense number of authors and their appalling fecundity, it would be a puzzling task to attempt anything like a satisfactory examination of the literature of this period. It must suffice to single out a few of its more prominent features.\*

The first we notice is the immense advances which have been made in history and biography. It may be sufficient to point out among the earlier specimens of enlightened industry in this field, the voluminous works of Sismondi, and the *Biographie Universelle*, in fifty-two closely printed volumes, undoubtedly the most valuable body of biography that any modern literature can boast.

It may afford some idea of the organization of this great work, to mention that it was set on foot in 1810 by a numerous association of booksellers and capitalists; but after some years fell into the hands of a single editor, and was brought to a conclusion in 1828. During this interval, more than 300 collaborateurs, whose names are placed at the end of their respective articles, were employed on it. Few of the celebrated names of the age but appear in this way; and yet, by a wise endeavor to suppress or amalgamate individual opinions, there has been attained, perhaps, as much homogeneity as could fairly be demanded.

Since the Revolution of 1830, historians and literary critics have occupied the foreground in French literature. The

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\* It has been deemed the less necessary to enlarge here, as the Messrs. Chambers have published a People's Edition of the excellent little treatise of M. Véricour on Modern French Literature, occupied chiefly with that of the present age.

[An edition of this work, revised by W. S. Chace, was published by Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, at Boston, in 1848.]

historians have divided themselves into two schools, which they designate the descriptive and the philosophic; the former attaching themselves to graphic narrative, the latter to philosophic analysis. With the one class, history consists of a narration of facts in connexion with a picture of manners in such wise as to bring the scenes of the past vividly before the mind of the reader, leaving him to form his own conclusions, and to deduce general truths from the particular ones thus laid before him. The style of these writers is simple, *naïf*, and manly; there is no straining after effect, no use of meretricious ornament, no opinions of the writer shining through his statements. The most eminent professed authors of this class are MONSIEUR THIERRY, in his *Letters on the History of France*, and the *Conquest of England by the Normans*; BARANTE in his *Littérature Française au dix-huitième Siècle*, and *Les Ducs de Bourgogne*; VILLEMMAIN'S *Cromwell*; and the *Historical Sketches* of ALEXANDRE DUMAS; DE VIGNY'S historical novels of *Cinq Mars* and *Stello*. They look upon Sir Walter Scott as their great master.

The philosophical school, on the other hand, consider this scenic kind of narrative as of very inferior value. They relate the events of the past chiefly in order to arrive at general conclusions which may serve to direct the conduct of men in the future. They discuss while they narrate, and history in their hands is more a lesson than a pastime. At the head of this school is M. GUIZOT, who has displayed the philosophic mode in his *History of the Civilization of Europe*, *Essays on the History of France*, and the *English Revolution*. THIERS and MIGNET, both of whom have written on the French Revolution, are the most eminent of Guizot's school; while all of them resemble the celebrated German Niebuhr, and the English Gibbon and Mill. The philosophical historians have been again divided according to their different theories, but the most eminent of them are those whom M. Châteaubriand calls

fatalists ; men who, having surveyed the course of public events, have come to the conclusion, that individual character has had little influence on the political destinies of mankind ; that there is a general, active, continuous, and inevitable series of events which regularly succeed each other, with the certainty of cause and effect, and that it is as easy to trace as it is impossible to resist or divert it from its course. A tendency to these views is more or less visible in almost every French historian or philosopher of the present time ; but some carry them much further than others. Guizot says of himself, that, “in the individual he finds the species, and in the nation the whole of humanity.” The philosophy of history, grounded on such views, as distinguished from the philosophy of man’s individual nature, has assumed the aspect of a science in the hands of recent French historians. But it has too often happened, that when they would point out an important truth, they have enunciated it in such mystified expressions, have attached to it so many wild hypotheses, and have been so little careful to examine rather than declaim, that very little real progress has been made towards a truly scientific exposition of history. Meanwhile, they have displayed admirable patience in searching after their evidence ; and if they have done little to advance the philosophy of history beyond the accumulation of facts, this at least is a valuable result of their labors.

MICHELET and QUINET call themselves the symbolical school of historians, and profess to combine the descriptive with the philosophic. The leading peculiarity of their works appears in their opposition to Jesuitism, which, they maintain, has betrayed the Roman Catholic Church, and may betray Christianity itself, into the hands of its enemies. Michelet’s principal works are—the *Life of Luther* ; the *Life of Vico* ; a *History of France* ; a *Roman History* ; a *Compendium of Modern History* ; besides *Priests, Women and Families* ; the



*People*; and several smaller works, which are well known among us through the medium of translations. Quinet has written the *Genius of Religions; Germany and Italy; Discourses on the Literatures of the South of Europe; My Holidays in Spain; Ultramontanism*—a work which electrified France, and roused bitter opposition; which, however, did not prevent the gifted author from adding *Christianity and the French Revolution*, an inquiry into the operations of the Almighty in the progress of society.

Literary criticism in connexion with history has recently occupied a large space in the field of French literature. Not to dwell on SISMONDI'S *Literature of Southern Europe*, which appeared as one of the first fruits of the peace of 1815, with the almost contemporary work of GINGUENE on Italian literature, and RENOUARD on Provençal poetry, there have been and still are in the field a host of authors, whose chief study has been the literature of their own country—such as Guizot, St. Beuve, Villemain, Nisard, Vinet,\* and Barante, to whose pages our own have been highly indebted.

If to the historians and literary critics we add the investigators of science—such as Cuvier, Arago, Dupin, Raoul-Rochette, Royer-Collard, Ségur, Biot, and others of similar stamp—we have before us the men who form the intellectual glory of their age and nation.

As it regards speculative philosophy, M. Damiron has ranged the various authors whose opinions he has analyzed under three schools—the Sensualistic, the Theological, and the Eclectic. The first of these embraces the disciples of Locke and Condillac, whose opinions we more particularly noticed as the prevailing ones in the eighteenth century. The men of the nineteenth who have been most eminent in this class are Cabanis, Dustutt Tracy, Volney, Laromiguière, and Azais. Damiron's

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\* An English translation of Vinet's *History of French Literature in the Eighteenth Century* has been published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1854.

account of the opinions of the theological philosophers—that is, of those who assume the dogmas of the Roman Catholic religion as the data of a philosophical system—is briefly expressed thus: “In general human nature is not good, and it therefore has need of coercion. If those who govern do not rule according to this principle, it is to be feared that disorder and anarchy will ensue. It requires a master to constrain, to subject, and to force it to fulfil the conditions of its destiny. *Elle se perdrait par la liberté, car certainement elle ne l’emploierait pas dans un but d’expiation et n’en userait pas pour son salut.* Rulers ought not to be considered tutors or guardians, but judges and correctors. It is the wicked they have to do with, for human nature is wicked; they must not yield to the people, but they must govern them imperially and treat them *souverainement.*” Such, however, were assuredly not the political opinions of the recently deceased Abbé de LAMENNAIS, the most ardent and powerful of those writers who have maintained during the present age that the ancient faith of France is what is lacking to its national prosperity. He took up his pen when the crown was about to be placed on the head of the first Napoleon; and when the concordat was signed assuring the Romish clergy of protection, he published a pamphlet, in which he denounced the hollowness of the Emperor’s profession. It is believed that the Church of Rome has never had so courageous and so intelligent an advocate since the days of Luther’s personal opponents. The reputation of Lamennais has its best foundation in his *Essai sur l’Indifférence en Matière de Religion*, in which he develops all his opinions, and declares that *la société n’est plus qu’un doute immense.* “The community,” he says, “is atheistic; the political aggregate of the nations of Europe is only a corpse; give it faith, and you will give it life again.”

M. COUSIN is the leader of the eclectic philosophy of France, which appears to be a modification of that of Schelling in Ger-

many. It is impossible to read his *Fragments Philosophiques* without perceiving his conclusion to be, that God and matter are one, and that individual existences are only parts and portions of the absolute, the *ens realissimum*, even as an individual space is a portion of space infinite. Not only are all forms of religion condemned under this theory, but a divine revelation is depreciated, if not utterly repudiated. "Revelation is accessible only through tradition. But revelation, even when it is faithful, cannot in itself be clear or precise, because it treats of a vague and obscure subject. It wants light—true, naïve, and inspired—full of simplicity and greatness, abounding in poetry. It is throughout, as it were, a popular song, or rather a metaphysical hymn; but there is no theory, for all is sensible. Thus traversing ages and countries, translated and retranslated, variously interpreted, modified in a thousand ways, incomplete and altered: in this state it reaches generations little fitted either by their position or habits of thought to comprehend it; and, far from enlightening, it serves but to perplex their understanding, to harass and disgust their genius."

And again: "Philosophy is the worship of ideas, and of ideas alone; it is the last victory of thought over every form and element foreign to itself; it is the highest rank of the freedom of the understanding. Industry was one enfranchisement of nature; the state, a still further enfranchisement; art, a new progress; religion, a progress still more sublime: philosophy is the last enfranchisement, the last progress of thought." Not repudiating, as it will be perceived, but undervaluing religion as an inferior step in civilization. Here is his final declaration on this subject:—

"In my opinion, all truths are contained in Christianity; but these eternal truths may, and ought to be, at this day, approached, unravelled, and illustrated by philosophy. There is but one truth at bottom; but truth has two forms—that of

mystery, and that of scientific exposition. I revere the one; I am here the organ, the interpreter of the other.”

It would be a task as vain as ungrateful, to present in detail the principles of a philosophy which is likely to be as much in vogue in France as in Germany—abounding in daring thought and generalization, undermining revelation by exalting reason as all-sufficient in its stead; but in this superior to the infidelity of the last century—that its tendency is to elevate the mind and develop the moral principle, instead of leaving man grovelling in mere matter, and destitute of any moral obligation but what is deducible from his bodily organization. It is incipient pantheism instead of atheism.\*

The present century has exhibited some new features in poetry. The humble position of France on the fall of Bonaparte—invaded and garrisoned by her enemies—awoke the patriotism of BERANGER, and inspired his heart-stirring songs. Hitherto, France had had no popular ballad-literature; all the previous poetry we have noticed was intended to be sung in courtly halls, in the ears of royalty, or in the circles of fashion, and it consequently partook more or less of courtly affectation, disdaining popular truth; but Béranger was the poet of the people.

Most of his earlier compositions were political, either extolling the greatness of the fallen empire, or bewailing the low estate of France under the restored dynasty of the Bourbons. They were received with enthusiasm, and sung from one end of the country to the other. For a time, the government

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\* Many differ from the author in the estimate of Cousin's Philosophy. The lectures on the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, have recently been translated into English and published. M. Cousin has rendered valuable service to literature in late years by his *Studies on Pascal*, and the renowned French women of the seventeenth century.



seemed to feel that it would not be prudent to interfere; so that the patriotic muse of Béranger had full scope, his themes becoming graver and his language bolder in each succeeding publication. When, however, in 1820, 10,000 subscription names were put down for a new edition of his effusions, a prosecution was set on foot, the poet convicted of libel, and committed to prison for twelve months. And now, under color of reporting the trial, the whole of the condemned songs were republished as part of the proceedings, uniform with a reissue of those admitted to be innocent; and the government being defeated in an attempt to suppress this supplement, the songs obtained authorized circulation throughout the kingdom.

The later songs of Béranger, which appeared in 1833, exhibit a not unnatural or unpleasing change from the audacious and too often licentious tone of his earlier days. His gayety is tempered with seriousness, and his purer taste has discarded much that was offensive to decorum. His political mission, as he himself says, being terminated, the tumult of political strife at an end, and the giddy fervor of youth tempered by the sorrowful experience of age, his mind turns with a livelier and closer sympathy to the contemplation of those sufferings which he daily witnessed in the annals of the poor. These he depicts with a truth and vigor which have seldom been equalled. Here, for instance, are the complaints of an actress reduced from a life of extravagant gayety to utter destitution—not a rare character, it is to be feared :—

It snows, it snows, but on the pavement still  
She kneels and prays, nor lifts her head;  
Beneath these rags through which the blast blows shrill,  
Shivering she kneels, and waits for bread.  
Hither each morn she gropes her weary way,  
Winter and summer there is she.  
Blind is the wretched creature! well-a-day!  
Ah! give the blind one charity!

Ah! once far different did that form appear;  
That sunken cheek, that color wan,  
The pride of throngéd theatres, to hear  
Her voice, enraptured Paris ran:  
In smiles or tears before her beauty's shrine,  
Which of us has not bowed the knee?—  
Who owes not to her charms some dreams divine?  
Ah! give the blind one charity!

How oft when from the crowded spectacle,  
Homeward her rapid coursers flew,  
Adoring crowds would on her footsteps dwell,  
And loud huzzas her path pursue.  
To hand her from the glittering car, that bore  
Her home to scenes of mirth and glee,  
How many rivals thronged around her door—  
Ah! give the blind one charity!

When all the arts to her their homage paid,  
How splendid was her gay abode!  
What mirrors, marbles, bronzes were displayed,  
Tributes by love on love bestowed:  
How duly did the Muse her banquets gild,  
Faithful to her prosperity:  
In every palace will the swallow build!—  
Ah! give the poor one charity!

But sad reverse—sudden disease appears;  
Her eyes are quenched, her voice is gone;  
And here, forlorn and poor, for twenty years,  
The blind one kneels and begs alone.  
Who once so prompt her generous aid to lend?  
What hand more liberal, frank, and free,  
Than that she scarcely ventures to extend?—  
Ah! give the poor one charity!

Alas for her! for faster falls the snow,  
And every limb grows stiff with cold;  
That rosary once woke her smile, which now  
Her frozen fingers hardly hold.

If bruised beneath so many woes, her heart  
 By pity still sustained may be,  
 Lest even her faith in Heaven itself depart,  
 Ah! give the blind one charity!\*

*Le Juif Errant* is considered one of the best of Béranger's pieces.

LE JUIF ERRANT.

Chrétien, au voyageur souffrant  
 Tends un verre d'eau sur ta porte.  
 Je suis, je suis le juif errant  
 Qu'un tourbillon toujours emporte.  
 Sans vieillir, accablé de jours,  
 La fin du monde est mon seul rêve.  
 Chaque soir j'espère toujours,  
 Mais toujours le soleil se lève.

Toujours, toujours  
 Tourne la terre où moi je cours,  
 Toujours, toujours, toujours, toujours.

Depuis dix-huit siècles, hélas !  
 Sur la cendre grecque et romaine,  
 Sur les débris de mille Etats,  
 L'affreux tourbillon me promène.  
 J'ai vu sans fruit germer le bien,  
 Vu des calamités fécondes,  
 Et pour survivre au monde ancien  
 Des flots j'ai vu sortir deux mondes.

Toujours, etc.

Dieu m'a changé pour me punir :  
 A tout ce qui meurt je m'attache.  
 Mais du toit prêt à me bénir  
 Le tourbillon soudain m'arrache.  
 Plus d'un pauvre vient implorer  
 Le denier que je puis répandre,  
 Qui n'a pas le temps de serrer  
 La main qu'en passant j'aime à tendre.

Toujours, etc.

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\* Edinburgh Review, vol. lvii. p. 495.

Soul, au pied d'arbustes en fleurs,  
 Sur le gazon, au bord de l'onde,  
 Si je repose mes douleurs,  
 J'entends le tourbillon qui gronde.  
 Eh ! qu'importe au ciel irrité  
 Cet instant passé sous l'ombrage ?  
 Faut-il moins que l'éternité  
 Pour délasser d'un tel voyage ?  
 Toujours, etc.

Que des enfants vifs et joyeux  
 Des miens me retracent l'image ;  
 Si j'en veux repaître mes yeux,  
 Le tourbillon souffle avec rage.  
 Vieillards, osez-vous à tout prix  
 M'envier la longue carrière ?  
 Ces enfants à qui je souris,  
 Mon pied balaira leur poussière.  
 Toujours, etc.

Des murs où je suis né jadis  
 Retrouvé-je encor quelque trace,  
 Pour m'arrêter je me roidis.  
 Mais le tourbillon me dit : " Passe !  
 Passe !" et la voix me crie aussi :  
 " Reste debout quand tout succombe ;  
 Tes aïeux ne t'ont point ici  
 Gardé de place dans leur tombe."  
 Toujours, etc.

J'outrageai d'un rire inhumain  
 L'homme-Dieu respirant à peine . . .  
 Mais sous mes pieds fuit le chemin.  
 Adieu, le tourbillon m'entraîne.  
 Vous qui manquez de charité,  
 Tremblez à ce supplice étrange.  
 Ce n'est point sa divinité,  
 C'est l'humanité que Dieu venge.  
 Toujours, toujours  
 Tourne la terre où moi je cours,  
 Toujours, toujours, toujours, toujours.



It has been remarked, as a striking characteristic of Béranger's songs, that they have a carefully arranged plan, each ballad forming a complete whole, from which no verse can easily be taken without injuring the general effect; whereas, English songs seldom appear to have any plan at all, and they might often be turned upside down, or deprived of half-a-dozen verses, without materially affecting the connexion of ideas.

The patriotism of CASIMIR DELAVIGNE\* took a more serious tone than that of Béranger, which was for the most part gay, sportive, and, it must be added, licentious. While the allied armies yet remained in France, and her pride, so long fed by a course of brilliant conquest, was feeling the sting of being thus occupied, Delavigne sang her misfortunes with power and pathos, giving his poems an elegaic form, and styling them *Messéniennes*. "I have borrowed this title from Barthélemi," said he, "to characterize a species of national poetry which no one has yet endeavored to introduce into our literature." The exaggerations of these poems were very suitable to the feeling which pervaded the country just at that time; and they were repeated at all the patriotic meetings, as the true expression of a nation's sorrow; but as these emotions gradually subsided, and the people became more reconciled to the new régime, the celebrity of Delavigne's elegies diminished in proportion.

LAMARTINE and VICTOR HUGO are confessedly the most eminent lyric poets of this century. In the hands of the former, the language, softened and harmonized, loses that clear, glancing, epigrammatic expression, which before him had appeared inseparable from French poetry.† Moreover, his

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\* Born 1793, died 1843.

† Lamartine's prose works should not be forgotten. Among them we may specially notice his *History of the Girondists*, *History of the French Revolution of 1848*, and *History of the Restoration of Monarchy in France*.

works are pervaded by an earnest religious feeling, with a chasteness and delicacy which render them the familiar favorites of the domestic hearth. The best collection of Lamartine's lyrics are his *Meditations*, which appeared in 1820, just at the time when that pensive religious feeling which settled over France after the Restoration, had been fostered by the works of Châteaubriand; and nothing could have given it more perfect expression. The *Harmonies*, likewise, chimed in fortuitously with a passion for mysticism, which very generally prevailed a short time previous to the political and literary revolution of 1830. They are of unequal merit; some rising to loftier notes than those in the *Meditations*, while few, if any, are so perfect throughout.

A brief specimen of the tender, imaginative, and dreamy style of Lamartine, may be presented in an English dress. It is an

## ODE TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

What time thy heavenly voice preludes  
Unto the fair and silent night,  
Winged minstrel of my solitudes,  
Unknown to thee I trace its flight.

Thou knowest not that one remains  
Beneath the trees, hour after hour,  
Whose ear drinks in thy wondrous strains,  
Intoxicated by their power;

Nor that the while a breath of air  
Escapes but from my lips with grief;  
And that my foot avoids with care  
The rustling of a single leaf;

Thou deemest not that one, whose art  
Is like thine own, but known to day,  
Repeats and envies in his heart  
Thy forest-born nocturnal lay!

If but the star of night reclines  
Upon the hills thy song to hear,  
Amid the branches of the pines  
Thou couchest from the ray in fear.

Or if the rivulet, which chides  
The stone that in its way doth come,  
Should speak from 'neath its mossy sides,  
The sound affrights and strikes thee dumb.

Thy voice, so touching and sublime,  
Is far too pure for this gross earth:  
Surely we well may deem the chime  
An instinct which from God has birth!

Thy warblings and thy murmurs sweet  
Into melodious union bring  
All fair sounds that in nature meet,  
Or float from heaven on wandering wing.

Thy voice, though thou mayst know it not,  
Is but the voice of the blue sky—  
Of forest glade, and sounding grot,  
And vale where sleeping shadows lie:

It blends the tones which it receives  
From prattlings of the summer rills,  
From trembling rustlings of the leaves,  
From echoes dying on the hills;

From waters filtering drop by drop  
Down naked crag to basin cool,  
And sounding ever without stop,  
While wrinkling all the rock-arched pool;

From the rich breeze-born plaints that flow  
From out the branchy night of trees;  
From whispering reeds and waves that go  
To die upon the shores of seas;

Of these sweet voices, which contain  
The instinct that instructeth thee,

God made, O nightingale, the strain  
Thou givest unto night and me !

Ah ! these so soft nocturnal scenes,  
These pious mysteries of the eve,  
And these fair flowers, of which each leans  
Above its urn, and seems to grieve ;

These leaves, on which the dew-tears lie,  
These freshest breathings of the trees—  
All things, O nature, loudly cry,  
“ A voice must be for sweets like these ! ”

And that mysterious voice—that sound,  
Which angels listen to with me,  
That sigh of pious night—is found  
In thee, melodious bird, in thee !

The following, which we give in the original, is considered one of his best pieces :—

## LE LAC.

Ainsi, toujours poussés vers de nouveaux rivages,  
Dans la nuit éternelle emportés sans retour,  
Ne pourrons-nous jamais sur l'océan des âges  
Jeter l'ancre un seul jour ?

O lac ! l'année à peine a fini sa carrière,  
Et près des flots chéris qu'elle devait revoir,  
Regarde ! je viens seul m'asseoir sur cette pierre  
Où tu la vis s'asseoir !

Tu mugissais ainsi sous ses roches profondes,  
Ainsi tu te brisais sur leurs flancs déchirées,  
Ainsi le vent jetait l'écume de tes ondes  
Sur ses pieds adorés.

Un soir, t'en souvient-il ? nous voguions en silence ;  
On n'entendait au loin, sur l'onde et sous les cieux,  
Que le bruit des rameurs qui frappaient en cadence  
Tes flots harmonieux.



Tout à coup des accents inconnus à la terre  
Du rivage charmé frappèrent les échos :  
Le flot fut attentif, et la voix qui m'est chère  
Laisa tomber ces mots :

“ O temps ! suspends ton vol ; et vous, heures propices !  
Suspendez votre cours :

Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices  
Des plus beaux de nos jours !

Assez de malheureux ici-bas vous implorent ;  
Coulez, coulez pour eux :  
Prenez avec leurs jours les soins qui les dévorent ;  
Oubliez les heureux.

Mais je demande en vain quelques moments encore :  
Le temps m'échappe et fuit ;  
Je dis à cette nuit : Sois plus lente ; et l'aurore  
Va dissiper la nuit.

Aimons donc, aimons donc ! de l'heure fugitive,  
Hâtons-nous, jouissons !  
L'homme n'a point de port, le temps n'a point de rive ;  
Il coule, et nous passons ! ”

Temps jaloux, se peut-il que ces moments d'ivresse,  
Où l'amour à longs flots nous verse le bonheur,  
S'envolent loin de nous de la même vitesse  
Que les jours du malheur ?

Eh quoi ! n'en pourrons-nous fixer au moins la trace ?  
Quoi ! passés pour jamais ! quoi ! tous entiers perdus !  
Ce temps qui les donna, ce temps qui les efface,  
Ne nous les rendra plus !

O lac ! rochers muets ! grottes ! forêt obscure !  
Vous, que le temps épargne ou qu'il peut rajeunir,  
Gardez de cette nuit, gardez, belle nature,  
Au moins le souvenir !

Qu'il soit dans ton repos, qu'il soit dans tes orages,  
Beau lac, et dans l'aspect de tes rians coteaux,  
Et dans ces noirs sapins, et dans ces rocs sauvages  
Qui pendent sur tes eaux.

Qu'il soit dans le zéphyr qui frémit et qui passe,  
 Dans les bruits de tes bords par des bords répétés,  
 Dans l'astre au front d'argent qui blanchit ta surface  
 De ses molles clartés.

Que le vent qui gémit, le roseau qui soupire,  
 Que les parfums légers de ton air embaumé,  
 Que tout ce qu'on entend, l'on voit ou l'on respire,  
 Tout dise : Ils ont aimé !

The fame of Lamartine rests chiefly on the *Meditations*, *Harmonies*, and *Jocelyn*, a kind of religious romance in verse, turning on the sorrows of an attached pair, who are separated by the hero being induced to take holy orders. His later works are inferior; and from a concurrence of circumstances not necessary to particularize, his once unbounded popularity has greatly declined.

The quiet and simple strains of VICTOR HUGO\*—tender, domestic, chastened both in their mournfulness and in their mirth, charged with unstudied expressions of youthful hopes, recollections, sorrows, friendships, and loves—are in singular contrast with some of his productions in drama and romance. We have met with a pleasing translation of one of his pictures of infancy; yet we would deem it unfair to withhold the original:—

Dans l'alcôve sombre,  
 Près d'un humble autel,  
 L'enfant dort à l'ombre  
 Du lit maternel.  
 Tandis qu'il repose,  
 Sa paupière rose,  
 Pour la terre close,  
 S'ouvre pour le ciel.

In the dusky court,  
 Near the altar laid,  
 Sleeps the child in shadow  
 Of his mother's bed :  
 Softly he reposes,  
 And his lids of roses,  
 Closed to earth, uncloses  
 On the heaven o'erhead.

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\* His poetical works consist of: 1. Odes et Ballades. 2. Les Orientales. 3. Les Feuilles d'Automne. 4. Chants du Crépuscule. 5. Les Voix Intérieures. 6. Châtiments. 7. Les Contemplations. 8. Dramas.

Il fait bien des rêves.  
 Il voit par momens  
 Le sable des grèves  
   Plein de diamans,  
 Des soleils de flammes,  
 Et de belles dames,  
 Qui portent des âmes  
   Dans leurs bras charmans.

Songe qui l'enchante !  
 Il voit des ruisseaux.  
 Une voix qui chante  
   Sort du fond des eaux.  
 Ses sœurs sont plus belles.  
 Son père est près d'elles.  
 Sa mère a des ailes  
   Comme les oiseaux.

Il voit mille choses  
 Plus belles encor ;  
 Des lis et des roses  
   Plein le corridor ;  
 Des lacs de délice  
 Où le poisson glisse,  
 Où l'onde se plisse  
   A des roseaux d'or !

Enfant, rêve encore !  
 Dors, ô mes amours !  
 Ta jeune âme ignore  
   Où s'en vont tes jours.  
 Comme une algue morte  
 Tu vas, que t'importe !  
 Le courant t'emporte,  
   Mais tu dors toujours !

Sans soin, sans étude,  
 Tu dors en chemin ;  
 Et l'inquiétude  
   A la froide main,

Many a dream is with him.  
 Fresh from fairy-land,  
 Spangled o'er with diamonds  
   Seems the ocean-sand ;  
 Suns are gleaming there,  
 Troops of ladies fair  
 Souls of infants bear  
   In their charming hand.

O ! enchanting vision !  
 Lo, a rill up-springs,  
 And from out its bosom  
   Comes a voice that sings.  
 Lovelier there appear  
 Sire and sisters dear,  
 While his mother near,  
   Plumes her new-born wings.

But a brighter vision  
 Yet his eyes behold ;  
 Roses all, and lilies,  
   Every path infold ;  
 Lakes in shadow sleeping,  
 Silver fishes leaping,  
 And the waters creeping,  
   Through the reeds of gold.

Slumber on, sweet infant,  
 Slumber peacefully ;  
 Thy young soul yet knows not  
   What thy lot may be.  
 Like dead leaves that sweep  
 Down the stormy deep,  
 Thou art borne in sleep,  
   What is all to thee ?

Thou canst slumber by the way ;  
 Thou hast learnt to borrow [care ;  
 Nought from study, nought from  
   The cold hand of sorrow,

De son ongle aride,  
 Sur ton front candide  
 Qui n'a point de ride,  
 N'écrit pas : Demain !

Il dort, innocence !  
 Les anges sereins  
 Qui savent d'avance  
 Le sort des humains,  
 Le voyant sans armes,  
 Sans peur, sans alarmes,  
 Baisent avec larmes  
 Ses petites mains.

Leurs lèvres effleurent  
 Ses lèvres de miel.  
 L'enfant voit qu'ils pleurent,  
 Et dit : Gabriel !  
 Mais l'ange le touche,  
 Et berçant sa couche,  
 Un doigt sur sa bouche  
 Lève l'autre au ciel !

On thy brow unwrinkled yet,  
 Where young truth and candor sit,  
 Ne'er with rugged nail hath writ  
 That sad word : "To-morrow !"

Innocent ! thou sleepest—  
 See the heavenly band,  
 Who foreknow the trials  
 That for man are planned ;  
 Seeing him unarmed,  
 Unfearing, unalarmed,  
 With their tears have warmed  
 His unconscious hand.

Angels, hovering o'er him,  
 Kiss him where he lies.  
 Hark ! he sees them weeping,  
 "Gabriel !" he cries ;  
 "Hush !" the angel says,  
 On his lip he lays  
 One finger, one displays  
 His native skies.

Shortly after the Revolution of July, 1830, BARBIER, then a very young man, attracted considerable attention by a new style of poetry, characterized by boldness and manly vigor, instead of the polish and regularity which we have remarked in earlier authors, especially those styled classic. A volume of sonnets, bearing the title of *Rimes Heroïques*, are introduced by the following explanation :—

" 'Selecting such as treated of names known in history, and grouping them according to their date, I have composed a kind of portrait-gallery, and decorated it with this title. I have not always sung the most brilliant and applauded, but rather the least happy and most pure, and those with whom my own views and feelings most led me to sympathize.' Monsieur Barbier's sonnets more than fulfil the promise held out by a preface, whose modesty but makes their merit more apparent. 'The sonnet,' he says, 'accustomed to give forth



a sigh, is susceptible of other tones;' and these indeed ascend to proud notes, and give forth manly accents. Here is Arnold of Winkelried at Sempach, before the archduke's impenetrable army, embracing a sheaf of lances, and as they are buried in his breast, bidding 'Victory and Liberty pass through the space he has opened;' here Madame Roland in the fatal cart, in white robes, and calm, with insult around her and the scaffold before, speaking her last words to the misused form of Liberty; here Egmont, his blood flowing over the pavement of Brussels; here Leopold of Brunswick, sinking beneath the waters of the Oder; and Barra, the republican boy of thirteen, already a soldier in the Blues, is here alone on the heath of La Vendée. He has met some stragglers of the royal army, who offer him life, and bid him cry, 'Vive le Roi!' He is 'pale and silent, till, the angel of the people soaring before his eyes, he shouts, Vive la République!' and dies."

It is not to be concealed, however, that the poems of Barbier are often disfigured by what is vulgar, impious, and licentious.

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#### XXIV.—NOVELS AND DRAMAS.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE LITERATURE WHICH FOLLOWED THE REVOLUTION OF 1830—VICTOR HUGO—HIS NOTRE DAME—ALFRED DE VIGNY—BALZAC—GEORGE SAND—A. DUMAS—VICTOR HUGO'S MARION DELORME—CONCLUSION.

THE period to which we are referring—that is, the years which immediately succeeded the Revolution of 1830—was distinguished by immense fecundity in light literature, consisting chiefly of dramas and romances, and bearing strongly the stamp of the prevailing excitement, suspense, conflict, and fear of change. Nothing calm, majestic, simple, or classical about it; everything hurried with the coarse rapidity of scenes for the stage, as though the watchword of literature

was: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." It bears evident traces of a chaos of opinion, as well as political uncertainty. It is not professedly an infidel literature, like that of the eighteenth century, any more than one of general faith and positive conviction, like that of the seventeenth. It seems to have no general aim; the efforts, like the opinions of the authors, contradicting one another, and even seldom being consistent with themselves for any length of time.

Not to dwell on the poetry, exhibiting monstrous exaggeration of coloring, audacity of speculation, extravagance of diction, the contortions of Sibyl without her inspiration—we must give the reader some idea of the novels and romances.

The elder fictions of France have been succeeded by a host of new ones, justly styled *La Littérature Extravagante*—as it has created an unreal world, emancipated from all the laws and exigencies of the actual, and even from the conventional rules which preside over the ordinary world of fiction. It delights in speculations upon "all fearful, all unutterable things"—in details of the most frightful atrocities, in the most singular alliances between the ludicrous and the terrible, the voluptuous and the horrific; in the prevalence of a fatalism, on the one hand, inducing man to live and die like the beasts that perish; and on the other, a desperation which vents itself in impiety, or evaporates in sarcasm. In reading these romances, we pass from the splendid palace to the miserable hovel, the loathsome dungeon, the infected hospital; thence to drunken revels, or licentious orgies, and infallibly to the guillotine or the Morgue.\* We are perpetually treading on the very confines

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\* The *Morgue* is the establishment for the reception of persons found dead, that an opportunity may be given for them to be claimed by their friends. It is, of course, a grand receptacle for those who have perished by suicide, which is a fashionable termination for the heroes and heroines of French romance.

of decency, and not seldom hurried into scenes of undisguised licentiousness.

The style of these works partakes a good deal of the wild incongruous character of the incidents. Metaphors, similes, illustrations drawn from the most revolting departments of the physical world on the one hand, or the most sacred precincts of the spiritual on the other; paradoxical maxims of morality dazzling for a moment and bewildering the mind; these mingled with occasional passages of great brilliancy and beauty; episodes introduced with skill and pathos, and a dash of humor enhancing the pathos, and giving an insight into the structure of society, which has been compared to the singularly acute perceptions which at times occur amidst the hazy visions of intoxication.

Doubtless many examples might be adduced of a more subdued and natural cast. But what we mean is, that the leading talent of the day, about the time referred to, took the direction we have indicated; that the dissection of the body social and the body politic sometimes by the coarsest instruments, and with the most needless display of its morbid anatomy in the shape of philosophical romances, almost superseded those more indulgent, and, probably, more true pictures of life which presented themselves to such men as Le Sage, Cervantes, and Sir Walter Scott.

No one denies to this literature the credit of engaging the reader's most intense interest, by the seductive vivacity of the movement, the variety of incident, and the perfect command which the authors seem to have of all those appliances which, coarse as they are, are the most calculated to affect minds which have been rendered callous to slighter emotions.

The names in this convulsive school are numerous, and their fecundity appalling: we can notice only the most prominent.

The first place is by general consent allotted to VICTOR

HUGO, whose *Notre Dame de Paris* has excited greater interest than any other fiction since those of Châteaubriand and Madame de Staël. Several of the characters appear to have been suggested by previous writers; but the descriptive portion introduces a striking novelty, the scene lying chiefly in a cathedral, and all the incidents passing either in or about it. The age is that of Louis XI., and the manners and customs of the fifteenth century are considered as faithfully portrayed. The story is that of a foundling, exposed under the roof of the cathedral of Notre Dame, and adopted by one of the priests. The infant is represented as a complete monster of deformity, of gigantic form and herculean strength, bow-legged, blind of an eye, his face frightfully pitted with small-pox, a huge tusk protruding from his lips, which lie by no means horizontally in his face, his hair composed of red bristles, and an enormous wen hanging over his right eye. Brought up in the cathedral, he succeeded to the office of bell-ringer, and gained a livelihood by its towers.

“In process of time, a union of the most intimate description was formed between the bellman and the church. Separated from the world by the double misfortune of his unknown birth and his ungainly form, imprisoned from childhood within these impassable boundaries, the unfortunate creature was accustomed to see no object in the world beyond the religious walls which had afforded him shelter. Notre Dame had been successively, as his growth proceeded, his egg, his nest, his house, his country—all the world to him.

“A sort of mysterious and pre-existent harmony had grown up between this creature and the edifice. While yet a child, creeping along, twisting and jumping under its shadowy arches, he appeared with his human face and scarcely human limbs, mingling with the grotesque shadows projected by the capitals of the Gothic pillars, as the native reptile of the dark dank pavement. The first time that he mechanically laid hold



of the rope hanging from the tower, clung to it, and put the bell in motion, the effect produced on his mind was like that a parent feels at the first articulate sounds of his child. As he grew up, his spirit expanded in harmony with his cathedral—there he lived, there he slept, and under the perpetual influence of its presence, he came at last to resemble it, to be incrustated with it, to be, as it were, an integral part of it. His salient angles seemed to fit into the corners of the edifice, so that he appeared not only the inhabitant, but as if nature had intended it for his shell, and that, like the snail, he had taken its form.”

The charm of the romance lies in the conception of this character, and in the singular art by which this monster, who at first awakens terror and disgust, comes at length to be an object of our pity and admiration, his mind expanding and refining under the influence of love. The archdeacon, Claude Frollo, by whom the monster Quasimodo was adopted, is a person of extraordinary sanctity and learning. Having exhausted the limited science of his age, he has betaken himself to the dark studies of alchemy and astrology; but neither these absorbing pursuits, nor the mortifications of his cloistered solitude, have extinguished the passions of the man. He chances to see a gipsy-girl of singular grace and beauty, dancing in the streets, amidst an admiring throng of gazers; and he becomes enamored of her charms. This passion of the priest for Esmeralda, his jealousy, his mixture of persecution and adoration, form the main plot to which the rest of the action is subservient. At one time, he betrays her into the hands of justice; at another, he risks his life, and even his reputation for sanctity, in order to save her; but a most unexpected rival appears in the person of his own slave, Quasimodo, whom an act of kindness and sympathy has converted into the humblest and most delicate, as well as the most ardent of the elegant gipsy's admirers. He performs incredible feats of

heroism in her service, but she is alike indifferent to the fervent passion of the archdeacon and the faithful services of the muscular hunchback. Fascinated by a brilliant uniform and a handsome face, she has fixed her simple affection on a vain young officer of gendarmerie, and she loves to the death. The priest, at a critical moment, plunges a dagger into the side of his rival; the poor gipsy is accused of the act, tortured, persecuted, and eventually gibbeted. This catastrophe it was in the power of the priest to avert, but he hoped by working on her fears, to obtain her consent to his proposals. Even at the foot of the scaffold, however, she rejects his advances with loathing and scorn. Thus baffled by the scorn and firmness of the lovely outcast, he ascends the tower of Notre Dame to feast his eyes with the spectacle of her death; and as he leans over the parapet gazing on the fatal Place de Grève, Quasimodo hurls him from the giddy height, two hundred feet "plumb down," upon the pavement below. This description is terrible beyond conception. Every motion, every struggle of the wretched priest, every clutch of his nails, every heave of the breast, as he clings to the projecting spout which has arrested his fall; then the gradual bending of the spout beneath his weight, the crowd shouting beneath, the monster weeping above—for he had loved the priest, though urged to this deed by the fury of disappointed attachment—the victim balancing himself over the depth below; his last convulsive effort ere he quits his hold, even the turns of his body as he descends, and then the final crash and rebound upon the pavement—all are portrayed with dreadful minuteness, and convey the faithful reality.

We need scarcely remark, that there are extravagances not a few, both of style and sentiment, in this work; yet it remains a standing monument to the fame of Victor Hugo.

M. ALFRED DE VIGNY is, like Victor Hugo, a lyric poet

and a dramatist as well as a novelist. His historical romance of *Cinq-Mars*, or a conspiracy under Richelieu, has obtained a lasting reputation; and it is to be remarked that his novels are composed with great care, highly polished, and disfigured with comparatively few deviations from good taste and propriety.

Not so M. BALZAC, one of the most popular and copious of modern writers, some of whose works are in the highest degree vicious and immoral; while the style is in some places pure and beautiful, in others extravagant, and even grossly indecorous. His intellect has been characterized as a heterogeneous mine, containing ore of every description; and his works, as forming a collection as singular and diversified as may be found in the literature of any country.

The novels of the celebrated GEORGE SAND (Madame Dudevant) afford a lamentable proof of the aberrations into which a highly gifted mind may be led under the influence of unsanctified sorrow. Unfortunate in her marriage, and stung by the treatment of a heartless, corrupt, and hypocritical society, she seems to have been goaded to exasperation by a sense of wrong, and to have sought retaliation by depicting society in the most revolting colors. Her earlier novels are highly wrought pictures of the wretchedness of married life, the heroines being women of warm affections and fine sensibilities, chained by *Mariages de Convenance* to men of gross and uncongenial habits, and escaping a premature grave only by repudiating the duty of conjugal fidelity, which is of course made to appear a most venial error, if an error at all. It is right to add, that this lady's mind has undergone a signal change since the publication of these works, and her more recent ones are what may be termed religious novels.

EUGENE SUE was the first to introduce the maritime novel

into France, and his works of this kind evince great fertility of fancy and power of description. Most of his scenes and characters, however, are overwrought and exaggerated; and his reflections too often crude, sententious, and distorted. But the chief fault appears to be, that this writer undertakes to uphold the fatal paradox, that virtue is always unfortunate in this world, and crime always triumphant; the villains who figure as the heroes of his novels are ever prosperous in their lives, and honored in their deaths. The later labors of this author have been devoted to pictures of society on terra firma. His *Mysteries of Paris* is perhaps the best known in this country, admitted to command absorbing interest, though crowded, like most of his works, with atrocities and extravagances.

It is too true, and deeply to be regretted, that those writers who keep within the bounds of sense and decorum, and endeavor to combine instruction with amusement, have not commanded the same degree of interest that has generally attended every new production of the *Littérature Extravagante*. Public opinion has, indeed, greatly changed, and a general note of disapproval is now attached to these wild and revolting fictions; yet they are extensively read, if only to be condemned, while such authors as Prosper Mérimée are slowly appreciated.

The remarks we have made on the unnatural and depraved state of fictitious narrative in France, apply still more forcibly to the theatre. The dramatists form a numerous body, who seem to spurn all traditionary canons and established rules, to indulge in the strangest conceits and the wildest innovations, vying with each other in the delineation of vice and wretchedness in their most disgusting forms. These aberrations are attributed by native critics chiefly to an egregious misconception of Shakspeare, who, with Schiller and Goethe, is all the rage. Among the best of the works that mark the transition



from the old formal classic drama to the modern style introduced from England and Germany, are the *Henri III.* of M. ALEXANDRE DUMAS, the *Maréchale d'Ancre* of M. ALFRED DE VIGNY, and some of Victor Hugo's plays, especially his *Marion Delorme*.

Marion is no less a personage than the celebrated beauty and courtesan who flourished in the time of Louis XIII. But her soul becomes purified by a strong and abiding affection; she execrates her past life; and at the opening of the drama, is introduced as having quitted the brilliant court of Paris, to meet Didier in retirement at Blois. When he arrives, he falls at her feet, and tells the story of his life: that he is a foundling, whose life has been spent in struggling with a heartless world; the hypocrisy, injustice, and selfishness of his fellow-creatures had reduced his too sensitive mind to a state of misanthropy, or rather a silent, corroding melancholy; a poor, unloved, unknown wanderer upon earth, he had met with her, and her beauty had been the first sunbeam that had gladdened the desolation of his spirit. When he has finished his narration, she playfully replies: "You are singular; but I love you thus." He hails the avowal with rapture, and implores her to seal it by marriage, while she is tortured by the contending feelings which forbid her either to accept his proposal, or explain the reasons of her refusal. In this scene, as in those which follow, in the duel for which Didier is sentenced to death, in the efforts which Marion vainly makes to save him, there is much that is unfit for the eye of modesty. But the closing scene of mutual pardon and farewell is considered a fine burst of poetry and passion, true to the sensibilities of nature in a high state of excitement.

Viens, pauvre femme !

\*

\*

\*

\*

Oh ! viens, que je te dise ! Entre toutes les femmes,  
Et ceux qui sont ici m'approuvent dans leurs âmes,

Celle que j'aime, celle à qui reste ma foi,  
 Celle que je vénère enfin c'est encore toi!  
 Car tu fus bonne, douce, aimante, dévouée!  
 Ecoute moi : ma vie est déjà dénouée,  
 Je vais mourir, la mort fait tout voir au vrai jour.  
 Va, si tu m'as trompé, c'est par excès d'amour!  
 Et ta chute d'ailleurs, l'as tu pas expiée?  
 Ta mère en ton berceau t'a peut-être oubliée  
 Comme moi. Pauvre enfant! tout jeune, ils auront  
 Vendu ton innocence! \* \* \*

Ah! relève ton front!

—Ecoutez tous! A l'heure où je suis, cette terre  
 S'efface comme une ombre, et la bouche est sincère!  
 Hé bien, en ce moment, du haut de l'échafaud,  
 Quand l'innocent y meurt, il n'est rien de plus haut!  
 Marie, ange du ciel que la terre a flétrie,  
 Mon amour, mon épouse! écoute moi, Marie—  
 Au nom du Dieu, vers qui la mort va m'entraînant,  
 Je te pardonne.

*Marion (étouffée de larmes). Ciel!*

*Didier. A ton tour maintenant.*

*[Il s'agenouille devant elle.]*

Pardonne moi!

*Marion. Didier!*

*Didier (toujours à genoux). Pardonne moi, te dis-je!*

C'est moi qui fus méchant. Dieu te frappe et t'afflige  
 Par moi! Tu daigneras encor pleurer ma mort.  
 Avoir fait ton malheur—va, c'est un grand remord!  
 Ne me laisse pas—pardonne moi, Marie!

If such is one of the best of modern French dramas, considered highly moral in its conception and tendency, it may be inferred what those are that have proceeded from the pen of Balzac, Eugène Sue, and George Sand.

We cannot better conclude this rapid sketch than in the language of an eminent French littérateur :—"Modern French literature is a strange, fantastic, wild medley of light and

gloom ; the consequence of the state of society itself, which is yet unsettled, tumultuous, and febrile, as we have already observed, after a great political but ill-directed movement. Nevertheless, from out this vortex many powerful, noble, and gifted intellects will undoubtedly arise. The labors of divers contemporaries are in harmony with the epoch, it is true ; but taste will be purified by experience ; others will be hailed at a future period who are known to be devoted to the highest subjects of human interest ; and as art is multiform, and as none of its expressions are to be suppressed when they emanate from nature, others again will rise, but isolated in their thoughts, and devoted to that calm and measured beauty, to the perfection of thought, and the excellency of language. . .

“ France is advancing towards her final destiny through an era of trials—a period of expiation, perhaps, during which human ideas and general intellect are wavering in uncertainty. Her literature is the perfect image of the national anxiety and anarchy. We see in it individual thought reaching its utmost limits, accompanied by various excesses, owing to the absence of a recognised barrier, of a social bar and spirit of unity, that would keep it in its proper and befitting confines ; but times of unity, of prosperous fertility and perfection, will follow.”\*

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\* For a truthful picture of some of the recent changes in the literary spirit of France, see *North American Review*, January, 1857.

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